Ambiguity & the Search 4 Meaning:

**Ambiguity and the Search for Meaning:
English and American Studies
at the Beginning of the 21st Century**

Volume 1: Literature

Jagiellonian University Press

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Preface

The present volume offers a selection of papers presented at the Eleventh International April Conference "Ambiguity and the Search for Meaning: English and American Studies at the Beginning of the 21st Century," which took place in Kraków on 23-25 April 2008. The occasion gathered specialists in English and American studies from several European countries and the United States, continuing the tradition of triennial meetings held in Kraków since 1978. It has become a tradition for each successive April Conference to attract more participants than the previous one; in 2008, 138 linguists and literary scholars met in Kraków and 120 papers were read.

This volume contains a selection of 37 papers on literature and culture. The authors address one of the main dilemmas facing the literary scholar: how to position themselves towards the issue of ambiguity in literature. The universality of the theme resulted in a variety of critical approaches, starting from Terence McCarthy's staunch defence of definite meaning in Malory's *Morte Darthur* to Robert Rehder's celebration of ambiguity in Modernist poetry and art. Elinor Shaffer reminded us of the significance of William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, whose 80th anniversary of publication comes in 2010, for the development of English studies. The articles span over 600 years of writing in the English language from Malory to Banville, from medieval romances to George Harrison's songs. To quote William Empson, who was a silent presence at the conference, each of them marks an attempt at "teasing out the meanings of the text."[1]

We would like to express our gratitude to the Advisory Board, who refereed the papers for publication and provided many valuable comments for the authors and editors. Our thanks go to Teresa Bela, Joelle Biele, Julie Campbell, Benjamin Colbert, Marta Gibińska-Marzec, Aleksandra Kędzierska, David Malcolm, Irena Przemęcka, Krystyna Stamirowska-Sokolowska, Lisa Vargo and Anna Walczuk. All the errors that may have found their way into the text are, of course, the responsibility of the editors.

[1] William Empson, Preface to the Second Edition of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 3rd ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956) x.

The Editors would like to express their sincere thanks to the Faculty of Philology of the Jagiellonian University, as well as to the Institute of English Philology, for subsidizing the publication of this volume.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of Robert Rehder, an eminent scholar, a distinguished poet and a great friend, who not only participated in five of our conferences, but also generously shared his poetry with us. His presence will be sorely missed.

The Editors

Elinor Shaffer
Clare College, Cambridge
School of Advanced Study, University of London

Seven Times Seven Types of Ambiguity: William Empson and Twentieth-Century Criticism

A crucial year in modem literary studies was 1928, when William Empson (1906-1984) wrote *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (published in 1930). That was eighty years ago. If Empson was always "brilliant," and later in life perhaps "brilliant though idiosyncratic," it has increasingly been borne in upon literary historians, looking back on the last century, that William Empson was the most brilliant English critic of the twentieth century. His reputation was created by that first book, but his later work would bear it out.

As a Cambridge undergraduate, he had taken the first two parts of the Mathematical Tripos, and turned to English Literature. Cambridge was a place of intense interest and intellectual ferment at the time. When Empson came up to Magdalene College from Winchester in 1925, the names in the air were Wittgenstein and Russell, and in the wider literary world, T. S. Eliot (who would come to Cambridge in 1926 to deliver his lectures on *The Metaphysical Poets)',* but in the relatively new University subject of English Literature (separated from Classics only in 1913) there was by 1926 an array of talent whose names would become even better known as the decades passed.

The beginning of this fruitful period might be put even earlier: for in 1918 I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden collaborated on *The Meaning of Meaning.* Frank Kermode (2009), in a recent collection of his reviews, comments on the era thus begun, also referring to Noel Annan's memoirs, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation,* where the historian and former Provost of King's College, Cambridge defines a generation of post-World War II figures, comparing them with their post-World War I counterparts. In the earlier period at Cambridge (and here I speak of English studies), were to be found not only I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis, and amongst the keen students, Empson himself, Queenie Roth (to become better known as Q. D. Leavis), Muriel Bradbrook (to become a noted Shakespearean and Mistress of Girton), Kathleen Raine (to become known as a leading Blakean poet -"seer"), Jacob Bronowski (a mathematician who would later become a celebrity through his television series, *The Ascent of*

Man), Hugh Sykes Davies (who would be an English don in Cambridge for the rest of his days), the novelist Malcolm Lowry, whose novel *Under the Volcano* would become a kind of classic, "E. E. Phare," who became better known as Elsie Duncan-Jones, an articulate critic who went to Birmingham to teach, and many others who played a role in the intellectual life of the Union (the debating society) and of the various periodicals edited by students such as *Experiment* and *Granta* (the world in which Empson first, as a mathematician, came to know the literary crowd and then published his earliest essays). In any undergraduate generation, it is students from a variety of different subjects who play a role in the "public life" of the University; think of Jonathan Miller, a medical student, who (in the generation of the late 1950s) became most famous for his role in student cabaret.

Of the Cambridge luminaries of the post World War I period, no doubt the most important for Empson was I. A. Richards, his mentor at Magdalene, whose obituary he later wrote for the *London Review of Books*. Richards's first lectures on *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, to be a major book, were given in 1924, when Empson was still a mathematics student; he heard only some (two, he said) of the lectures of 1929, which became the widely influential book *Practical Criticism*. But Richards also became Empson's Director of Studies at Magdalene College when he changed his subject from mathematics to English, as well as his supervisor (Cambridge parlance for "tutor") for Part I of the Tripos (a second-year examination). Thus he had demonstrations of "practical criticism" at first hand. The shoe may have been on the other foot; for the examples of poor reading by students given in *Practical Criticism* were far outstripped by the brilliant readings of Richards's best student. As Kermode (2009: 22), not given to unconsidered enthusiasm, writes in a book of his recently collected reviews, "And indeed, at this time Cambridge was virtually the world."

In 1930 Empson gained his degree in English, a First-Class Degree with Special Distinction, and was elected to a Bye-Fellowship by his College, Magdalene.

It is striking now to realize to what extent that was a beginning point for all our thinking about English Literature as a university subject, both theoretically and in practice. When I arrived in Cambridge in the mid-sixties, many of those people were significant figures on the scene still, notably Dr Leavis, and those who opposed him. E. M. Forster was at King's. The New Criticism, which had taken root in the United States as the reigning doctrine, was the product of Richards and his interpreters; John Crowe Ransom in his 1941

book *The New Criticism* acknowledged *Seven Types of Ambiguity* as a model, much to Empson's dismay, as he disclaimed any wish to distance himself from the author's intention or from historical circumstances. In an otherwise respectful review of Cleanth Brooks's *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* in 1939, he had already summed up his final judgement: "the things Mr Brooks's theory excludes cannot be excluded in practice" (Empson 1987: 342). The New-Critical duo Wimsatt and Warren, whose ban on biography (in "The Intentional Fallacy") became a shibboleth, were only shaken off as followers of Empson when Empson himself deployed biography so cunningly, and not at all biographically, in *Using Biography* (published in 1984, the year of his death). When later it was suggested he was also a forerunner of continental Deconstructionism, he was equally quick to demur. It was not easy to remain independent of his own impact. In Cambridge when I began to teach, "Practical Criticism" was a compulsory examination paper in the English Tripos; a strong option was Basil Willey's "Moral Sciences" paper, originally influenced by Richards's 1924 lectures *{Principles).*

However, there was one notable absence. William Empson himself was not in Cambridge at that time, and had not been there since 1930. Almost immediately on his election as Bye-Fellow a scandal had erupted: in July his bedder (College servant) discovered contraceptives in his room, and after a hearing he was deprived of his Bye-Fellowship by the College Council and required to leave Cambridge. Richards, who might have been able to prevent this heavy sentence, was away in China at the time.

In the same year, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* was published by the Hogarth Press, where Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf took the young man's side, as did many others, against the Magdalene action. His assured academic career removed at a stroke, his reputation was nevertheless made.

Casting about for what to do, he was recommended for a Chair of English at Tokyo University, a three-year appointment; here begins the other career of William Empson, in the Orient. Returning from Japan to live in literary digs in Marchmont Street in London, he eked out a living by reviewing, published his first book of poems, and wrote a second brilliant critical book: *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935). This is perhaps the most attractive of all his books, with grace and acuity tracing the pastoral element from Shakespeare to his revelatory chapter on *Alice in Wonderland.*

After this *annus mirabilis,* he accepted an appointment in China, at the National Peking University; and here I. A. Richards was instrumental in arranging it, for Richards's interest in the promotion of Basic English in the Far

East had taken him there and he wanted Empson's help. Empson arrived in time to experience the invasion of China by the Japanese, and to teach English through thick and thin, in considerable danger. When he returned to England again it was to a country itself about to undergo attack, and he joined the BBC as a Far East expert.

When I arrived in Cambridge, then, Empson was (from 1953 to 1978) Professor of English at Sheffield University, and I had the good fortune to hear one of his later lectures, on Coleridge (which was my own thesis topic), and I will never forget the slightly shambling, mandarin-bearded figure who played acutely to the galleries, fishing dramatically for famous quotations which he had stored on little slips of paper in all his pockets and in his trouser turn-ups and which in any case he knew by heart. Indeed, he was renowned for his phenomenal memory for poetry, teaching in China during the Revolution in makeshift rooms without books, and later, in 1971-72, in Oxford giving one of his Waynflete Lctures on Donne's manuscripts during the blackout of an electricity cut - for which gallant feat he received a standing ovation (Haffenden 2007: 560-61). Empson not only had a phenomenal memory for poetry, he was a brilliant, unpredictable lecturer even when not in dangerous circumstances; as he noted of the Buddha's Fire Sermon, "On one occasion when the Buddha was preaching, the magic of his words became too much for him and he rose forty feet in the air, but he shouted down to the audience begging them to pay no attention; it would be over in a moment, and wasn't of the smallest interest compared to what he was saying. Any lecturer can sympathize with this point of view" (Notes, Empson 2000: 142-43).

Empson's criticism never lost its fine edge, and new modes of ambiguity kept bubbling to the surface. "Seven" types were not sacred - or rather, the number 7 was sacred, but did not limit the possible types of ambiguity and certainly not the number of ambiguities. In 1961 his book *Milton's God* took on a set of formidable critics and scholars whom he felt were endangering literature and literary criticism by their open espousal of a Christian point of view, beginning with Eliot, whom he had much respected, but whose public conversion to the Anglican Church in 1927 just after his Cambridge lectures had, in Empson's view, conjured up a group of avowedly "Christian critics," who he felt were sacrificing both literature and humanity to a sectarian interest. Far from backing down in the face of his well-placed antagonists, he carried the controversy further in his writings on other seventeenth-century poets, John Donne (whose use of the new scientific outlook he was the first to engage with) and George Herbert. Just as he would not concede the ground to the New Critics,

so he would not concede it to the neo-Christians. He maintained a humanist position which now had been extended and enlarged by his experience of Taoist and Buddhist world views in China and Japan.

It was also in the Waynflete series in Oxford (where some of the antagonists to his views, such as Helen Gardner and John Carey, were leading figures) that he gave a lecture entitled "The editorial choice of a text of a poem: examples from Donne and Coleridge," an apparently dry title, in which Empson displayed his ability to combine original insights into the poet's text and mind with the traditional tasks of the editor, which was exemplified also in his edition of the same year (1972) of *Coleridge's Poetry: A Selection*, in particular of "The Ancient Mariner," with its 100-page introduction. Here he carried his battle against the neo-Christian critics onto new ground.

There is still no more acute comment on Coleridge as poet and thinker (in my view) than Empson's analysis of the difference between "The Ancient Mariner" in the text of 1798 (published in *Lyrical Ballads')* and that of 1817 (in *Sibylline Leaves)* with the marginal glosses added, which subtly repositioned the poem in line with Coleridge's return from Unitarianism to Anglicanism. The neo-Christian critics were busily trying to win Coleridge, the youthful radical and Unitarian, for the Anglican interest, by reading his own later, more conservative stance back into the poetry written in his early period. Empson's brilliant reading restores the young Coleridge's poem.

Empson's first essay on this theme was "The Ancient Mariner," a substantial review essay that appeared in the *Critical Quarterly* in 1964 (Empson 1987: 297-319). His introduction to the new selection from Coleridge's poetry is virtually a small book in itself. The book made a considerable stir, and gave rise to some disagreements with Empson's co-editor David Pirie, varied press responses, and Martin Amis's support at the time for the restoration of the original pantheistic version of the poem.[1] Later criticism came from Jack Stillinger in his *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (1994) from the influential point of view of the new "pluralistic concept" of the text (that is, the view that "the text is paradoxically constituted by all of the authoritative versions one after the other") (Haffenden 2007: 569). This editorial principle is, of course, inapplicable to a case where precisely what is under consideration is the successive historical alterations in the text. J. J. Mays adopted a non-committal position as the editor of the variorum poems in the

[1] Haffenden (2007: 563-574) gives a summary of the controversies over the text of "The Ancient Mariner."

Collected Coleridge. But none does full justice to the brilliance of Empson's readings of "The Ancient Mariner." Empson made the point that Coleridge's antagonism to the slave trade made the guilt manifest in the poem political, which has been elaborated by recent New Historicist critics.[2] Empson points to Coleridge's "submerged politics" as well as his submerged and excessive feelings of personal guilt. To make its effect the poem had to leave the nature of the guilt unspecified and beyond any immediately visible cause.

Perhaps the most insightful review was by Charles Rosen, the distinguished American pianist and scholar of Romanticism, who grasps Empson's witty but profound point that "'The Ancient Mariner' warns us of the awesome consequences of religious guilt, and it is in this sense a deeply antireligious poem" (Rosen 1973: 12,28). Haffenden thinks Empson's major contribution is his stress on the neoplatonic daemonography in "The Ancient Mariner," which is not Christian and not "mere" pantheism but animism - the more primitive state of fear and superstition. This, of course, accords with the interest of Coleridge as a schoolboy, famously reported by Charles Lamb, in Thomas Taylor's translation of the Neoplatonist philosophers. In a recent book *Platonic Coleridge*, James Vigus has explicated the uses Coleridge made at different times in his life of these texts.

From the first review in *Argufying*, and more fully in the substantial Introduction to the re-edited text Empson burrows his way into the period, into the nascent Romantic movement and its interest in "unusual states," and into Coleridge's own states of mind, his groundless feelings of dread and guilt throughout his life, to reread this poem as it presented itself in 1797.[3] Such a reading would include Coleridge on the biblical criticism of the Unitarians and of the German higher critics as he experienced it in the 1790s and laid the groundwork for his later, informed and imaginative ways of dealing with its querying of the dating and authorship of first the Old Testament, then the New - far from the kind of outright rejection that these dangerous doctrines met with in the Church of England until 1891. Empson on superstition and its psychological states meshes finely with "the mythological school of criticism," which arose in response to the "higher criticism" (Shaffer 1975: chaps. 1-2).

Most important in Empson's view - and still vital for the understanding of the poem in its time and in itself - is the pantheistic argument of the poem.

[2] See Ebbatson, Kitson and Keane.

[3] See also Shaffer (1975) on Coleridge's knowledge of the new "higher criticism" of the Bible at the time of writing "The Ancient Mariner."

Coleridge was deeply affected by the debate over pantheism, which in Germany had seen Spinoza and after him Lessing castigated as a pantheist (and therefore as an offender against Christian views of the overlordship of God); his own bent in the early Romantic years was towards pantheism, or the spirit that dwelt in all nature, "the One Life within us and abroad," as one of his finest poems puts it. The Mariner's whole experience is within nature, creating the "natural supernatural." It is this birth of the divine terror within and through nature that is sublime. The poem's permanent power resides in this. Only later, as Empson saw, did Coleridge, turning back from Unitarianism to the Church of England and struggling to come to terms with Trinitarianism, feel called upon to reinterpret his own poem through the more orthodox doctrines represented by the marginal glosses of the 1817 version, a position still defended by some powerful voices bent on reducing Coleridge's early radicalism and his later trenchant criticism of the Church and relocating him in an Anglican mainstream that with Wordsworth marched staidly down the Victorian age.[4] Thus Empson was peeling the later interpretations off the poem to retrieve the original as written in 1797. Empson the editor, like Empson the critic, always read as a poet. It was as a poet reaching for Coleridge's original vision that he went beyond his merely editorial function.

"It is the intellectuality of the creature that turns a state of need into a state of pleasure" (qtd. in Haffenden 2005: 191). This crux of his aesthetics lay in his rational humanism, and he turned it first against I. A. Richards's behaviourism, which Richards had taken from the psychologist John Watson, making his Theory of Value merely a behaviourist, unconscious gain: a form of involuntarism. He never turned against Richards personally, but very early on he became aware of his major disagreement, the one that most directly leads to *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, with Richards's distinction between "meaning" and "emotional responses," that is, the notion that a given passage had one "meaning," while other responses were merely "emotional." Empson later turned the same argument against Christian stances. "Ambiguity" permitted the loosening of this unitary and limiting claim without letting slip the quest for critically justified interpretation.

Empson arrived early at the fundamental strategies of ambiguity. He had already given a talk on ambiguity as early as 20 January 1929 and published in *Experiment* in February 1929 the analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet xvi, which

[4] See, for example, Seamus Perry, "Empson's Coleridges" in *Some Versions of Empson*, ed. M. Bevis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 104-130.

would go straight into *Seven Types*. Further comments he made on an essay on Valery and Hopkins at the time show that Freud also entered into his thinking on ambiguity, as the Seventh Type (that is, opposites or full contradiction) explicitly acknowledged.

A major influence which sometimes goes unnoticed was the book co-authored by Laura Riding and Robert Graves, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), with its elaborate multiple readings of Shakespeare's sonnet cxxix, "Th'expence of Spirit in a waste of shame." Empson annoyed Graves and Riding by crediting only Graves as a source; only much later did Empson admit that he had first been struck by a passage in Graves's *On English Poetry* (1922), in which Graves attributed two separate meanings to the phrase "mine eyes dazzle" in the famous line in *The Duchess of Malfr*. "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young." Graves had argued that "dazzle" does duty for two emotions at once, "sun-dazzled awe at loveliness, tear-dazzled grief for early death."

Graves, in another book, *Impenetrability, or the Proper Habit of English* (1926), cited the brilliant double possibility in Keats's line in "The Eve of St Agnes," where Madeline is "clasped like a missal where swart paynims pray," which may be interpreted as either "fastened with a clasp of holiness" or "held lovingly in the hands," if the Paynims (pagans or heathens) are converted Christians, or as "shut and coldly neglected" if the Paynims are unconverted (qtd. in Haffenden 2005: 1.219). Empson said he had cited the later book by Graves and Riding that offered the analysis of a full poem (the Shakespeare Sonnet), rather than the earlier examples of single lines, but had first got the idea of fruitful ambiguity from the earlier book by Graves alone.

Moreover, Empson in rejecting Richards's notions of the "equilibrium" brought about by poetry (Richards's version of Kant's more systematic account of the aesthetic effect of "harmonizing the faculties"), finally stood closer to Graves's notions of conflict, both mental and societal, which are to be resolved but also represented in poetry: "the poet [...] must stand in the middle of the larger society to which he belongs and reconcile in his poetry the conflicting interests of every group" (1925).

In *Seven Types of Ambiguity* he espoused a version of this "conflict theory," if only to reduce the directly Freudian element:

> There is a variety of the "conflict" theory of poetry which says that a poet must always be concerned with some difference of opinion or habit between different parts of his community; different social classes, different ways of life, or modes of

> thought; that he must be several sorts of men at once, and reconcile his tribe in his own person. (qtd. in Haffenden 2005: 228)

While his view of it was primarily psychological, still the element of political and social differences is made explicit. It is here that his mode of practical reading through the subtleties of ambiguity not only maintained the free-thinking and enlightenment elements strong in Richards, but suggested the possibility of entering a larger arena of conflict. He is still, like Graves, speaking of "his own society;" yet through the subsequent widening of his political and his cultural horizons well beyond Cambridge his grounding in values he had located in his own mode of reading his Renaissance texts did not play him false. It is here that one may ask whether, and even suggest that "close reading" may indeed develop through Empson's later work into a mode capable of dealing with the ambiguities that beset cross-cultural interpretation, the ambiguities of today.

As so often, Frank Kermode made the most judicious summing up of Empson's place as a critic. Despite the fact that he had had his own disagreements with Empson, over Donne and Herbert, both their general positions and specific readings, (though he found some of Empson's views of Donne - that "POEM" was written from the vantage point of the planet Venus - peculiar, and doubted Empson's stress on Donne's adherence to the "New Science"). In an essay "William Empson: The Critic as Genius" he wrote, shortly after Empson's death:

> At a time when there are so many models and techniques that can be got up and assiduously applied, there are individual and eccentric gifts which remain the prerequisite of the best criticism; and Empson possessed them in the degree of genius. Second, there are at the moment attempts to enlist him posthumously in the ranks of a theoretical avant-garde; one sees why, but he does not belong there, and would have said so with his customary asperity and emphasis.
>
> (Kermode 1989: 3-4)

Another voice that would come to carry weight was that of Christopher Ricks. Ricks greatly appreciated his insights, and helped establish a friendly circle at Oxford. He attempted to elect Empson to the Professorship of Poetry, which Empson twice withdrew from competing for, on the grounds that Sheffield, which had permitted him to refuse the duty of Dean on grounds of ill-health, would be surprised to hear he was up to the arduous job of Professor of Poetry. Ricks's befriending of Empson may well have been a stratagem in his own battle to restore Milton's reputation against Leavis's attack, but that it was also a genuine and lifelong admiration can be seen in the brilliantly

Empsonian style of Ricks's Milton Lecture at Christ's College, Cambridge in 2009, the 400th anniversary of Milton's birth.

Other interesting critical opinions, apart from the extended battles with Rosamond Tuve over George Herbert and with Helen Gardner over Donne and Milton, were voiced by the waspish John Sparrow, who had been at Winchester with Empson, and would later become Warden of All Souls, Oxford, writing in 1930 of the probable consequences of Richards's *Practical Criticism* that the ignorant opinions of students reported in that book would in time lead to interviewing "crossings-sweepers and barkeepers" on their views of Shakespeare and Milton. This is indeed just what happened in the aftermath of the Constance school of reception studies that places stress on the "reader" as opposed to the author when (nearly half a century later) random passers-by were interviewed in the U.S. as to the meaning of texts (N. N. Holland, *Five Readers Reading* 1975)! Italo Calvino in his novel *If on a Winters Night a Traveller* brilliantly parodied the variety of extremes into which a "reader-oriented" criticism fell. Empson always remained dedicated - for all his own wit and inventiveness - to the attempt to understand the author's processes, the author's struggle not only to express his own thoughts, but also to imagine his effect on his own audience. As Empson (1981: 28) put it,

> At bottom, you are trying to imagine the mind of the author at the moment of composition, but this may be too hard taken alone, so you need to remember that he was intensely concerned at that moment with whether the words he had found "expressed" what he was trying to say, that is, whether they would have the effect he wanted upon the audience he was imagining.

And this committed the critic also to attempting to understand the historical context which the author and his imagined audience inhabited. In short, "ambiguity" was not to be cheaply bought by mere ignorance, nor by the alteration of meaning or response over time. But the author's mind included a place for an audience response - set into the time shared with the author yet unreadable in advance for his own text might change it. Thus there is an ambiguity or unavoidable tension in the writer's own intention. Often Empson's witty sallies are based on unexpected but accurate historical "placing," for example when he attributes T. S. Eliot's reliance on "moral paradox" to the fact that Eliot "was young in the great days of Oscar Wilde" (Empson 1981: 30). And often he is, with great subtlety, disambiguating.

Empson's development of the idea of ambiguity and its uses included a moral dimension. To draw this out fully would take more time and space than

we have here. But it has recently come to light again in a dramatic way through the story of one of his students and self-styled disciples, James Angleton. Angleton, a student at Yale, learnt of the art of reading a text according to the notions of the New Criticism, and he was especially taken with Empson's notion of the ambiguity of any prose statement. He corresponded with Empson (among other poets and critics), edited a journal and wrote poetry, and after graduation he went to work for the OSS in counter-intelligence. He began to apply the methods of the New Criticism to the dark matter of spotting double agents. He was encouraged by his superior Norman Holmes Pearson, who had himself been an instructor at Yale before joining the OSS. Angleton became an "expert" in winkling out turncoats and traitors (or "moles") by analyzing their prose statements. He made serious errors, which may perhaps be traced to the way he transformed Empson's flexible notion of "ambiguity" into a kind of lie detector, claiming that "read with sufficient care, all texts, no matter how thoroughly encoded, would yield at least two messages: the overt meaning and the hidden meaning' (qtd. in Hawkes 2009). Angleton's overzealous application of his method, however, led to accusations of treason. Reviewing Angleton's travesty of Empson's theory, Terence Hawkes points out that Empson himself rather than using ambiguity as a clue to separating the "true" from the "false" was willing to entertain the possibility that conflicting statements might both be true. In a striking statement, which undoubtedly points both to his extensive experience of war and politics in China, Japan,and Britain, but also to everyday life in any company, Empson wrote of the need for irony, or a special kind of ambiguity in moral matters:

> [PJeople, often, cannot have done both of two things, but they must have done either; whichever they did, they will have still lingering in their minds the way they would have preserved their self-respect if they had acted differently; they are only to be understood by bearing both possibilities in mind. (qtd. in Hawkes 2009)

This is an extraordinarily generous yet characteristically acute insight, and does much to explain people's life experiences, their own self-images, and the capacity for responding to an idea of the better that still resides within the less good. For Empson, it is also a moral insight that the lifelong reading of literary ambiguity may induce and confirm.

William Empson was and remains a great original mind, a singular figure, founder of schools he would have shrugged off, and the finest critic - at root a poet - writing in the English language in the twentieth century. After all the schools and systems have passed away, the unique and unmistakable style of an

individual mind remains, to remind us to continue to comprehend the humane enjoyment we experience in poetry. T. S. Eliot in his last lectures suggested that there was a great succession of poet-critics in English, from Philip Sidney to John Dryden to Samuel Coleridge to Matthew Arnold, and, in the twentieth century, he strongly implied, the mantle fell upon himself - but he could not altogether suppress the name of William Empson, putting him aside only on the grounds, he intimated, that Empson was as a poet not quite up to the mark. However posterity may judge of that, William Empson is in the best company.

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Robert Rehder

Meaning and Change of Form: Eliot, Pound and Niedecker

This is a passage from a well-known poem:

> Twit twit twit
> Jug jug jug jug jug jug
> So rudely forc'd
> Tereu (Eliot 1952: 43)

Four lines, six words, one repeated three times, another, six, a three-word phrase unconnected to the other words and all the other words without any syntax. As the poet says: "I can connect / Nothing with nothing" (Eliot 1952: 46). Another contemporary passage:

> Hang it all, Robert Browning,
> there can be but one "Sordello."
> But Sordello and my Sordello?
> Lo Sordels si fo di Mantovana.
> So-shu churned in the sea.
> Seal sports in the spray-whitened circles of cliff-wash,
> Sleek head, daughter of Lir,
> eyes of Picasso
> Under black fur-hood, lithe daughter of Ocean;
> And the wave runs in the beach-groove:
> "Eleanor, ¿Xivctuc and iXettrXic!" (2/6)[1]

Eleven lines, three languages, five sentences or almost sentences, there is more syntax here, but perhaps also more disconnection. The individual lines or sentence units are tightly knit, held together in part by the alliteration and consonance of s sounds and what appears to be a discussion of two subjects: Sordello and the sea. This turns out not to be the case. The first four lines are about Sordello: Browning's Sordello, Pound's Sordello and the opening of the

[1] Ezra Pound, *The Cantos*, New York: New Directions, 1996. References are given in parentheses. The first number is that of the canto; the second, the page.

Provencal *vida* of Sordello (71180-71255). So-shu is a corrupt Japanese form of Shiba Shojo, a Chinese Han dynasty poet, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (179-117), who is criticized by the poet Li Po for creating foam instead of waves. Pound took all this from Ernest Fenollosa's notes and quotes him as saying,"Shojo stirred up decayed (enervated) waves. Open current flows about in bubbles, does not move in wave lengths." None of these items of Chinese literary criticism is clear from "So-shu churned in the sea," nor is it at all clear that this is literary criticism, and using a Japanese name for a Chinese poet is especially hermetic. So-shu's churning is metaphoric, the seal's sporting is real, but, despite the beauty of the description why there is a seal here is obscure. To say, as Terrell does, that the seal is one of the forms that Proteus takes in the Odyssey does not explain it. Lir is a Celtic sea-god that Pound has borrowed from the *Mabinogion.* Eleanor is Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204) the wife of Louis VII of France and then of Henry II of England, the political complications of whose marriages contributed to the Hundred Years War, which is why Pound associates her with Helen of Troy. The two Greek epithets, ¿kivauc; and ¿kinxkii, "ship destroying" and "city-destroying" are Aeschylus' puns on Helen's name in *Agamemnon* (689).[2] The construction of the line implies that the three names are what the sea says. The poet has compacted ten different subjects: Robert Browning's Sordello, Pound's Sordello, Sordello of Mantua, a mediocre Chinese poet, seal, Celtic sea god, Picasso, waves running up on the beach, Eleanor of Aquitaine and Helen of Troy. Browning's Sordello is related to the real Sordello (and Pound's), but otherwise there is no real connection between the subjects. There is no argument, no syntactical relation, the subjects are merely juxtaposed.

The breakdown or break up of the sentence, the fragment as a unit of form, the absence of syntax, and the freeing of individual words are things that we see again and again from about 1920 on in poetry and prose, and it is as if they were chosen to prevent any conventional narrative from establishing itself, to mark the flow of time and impose a new space of unity. Eliot's "These fragments I have shored against my ruin" appears almost as a declaration of method. This view of the nature of things as incomplete and unfinished is one that recognizes that the world and the individual are constantly changing and that this poses a problem of unity and continuity.

As Synge said to Yeats,"Is not style bom out of the shock of new material?" (Yeats 1953: 323). The new material in this case was the new awareness of the complexity of mental events that involved a more vivid awareness of

[2] The glosses are based on Terrell 1980,4-5.

consciousness - thinking, memory, fantasy, dreams - and the unconscious, and of the amorphousness of experience, such that this experience could not be expressed in the old forms. The awareness was accompanied by an inability to believe in religions and systematic philosophical interpretations of the world and the increasing acceptance of scientific explanations that, because they were partial - fragmentary - tentative, subject to revision and impersonal, did not answer questions about the value and purpose of human life. The old answers no longer answered the old questions. There was a problem of meaning, of the way people understood themselves and their world. Poetry - and all art - became an "irregular metaphysics."[3]

The new awareness of the complexity of mental events, the inability to believe, and the acceptance of technical, hypothetical and partial scientific explanations combined to change (and increase) the feeling of time passing. The increased sense of the uniqueness of every object made it harder to connect them and created feelings of separation, isolation and alienation - between individuals and between the individual and the surrounding world. The fragment is a metaphor. As these feelings are inter- and inner connected, it is probably incorrect to think of them as separate or distinct. "I know better than to claim any completeness for my picture," says Emerson. "I am a fragment and this is a fragment of me," he declares, significantly in his essay, "Experience" (Emerson n.d.: 83). "Only connect" is Forster's imperative in *Howards End* (1910) and two sentences later he writes "Live in fragments no longer" (Forster 1953: 174-75). To feel that you and your world are different every moment is unsettling, to say the least, and calls into question fixed and static explanations. Disconnection is what happens when we are unable to find a relation between things. Juxtaposition means putting things side by side without interpreting them *and* is a way of relating them to more other objects than is possible using ordinary syntax - this disconnection is the name of new connections, if you like. This new material demands new forms, new ideas of unity, wholes and relationships. Nietzsche saw the relationship between belief and form. He comments in *The Twilight of the Idols* (1889): "I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar." (Nietzsche 1968: 38).

The first Cubist paintings were the landscapes Braque painted at L'Estaque in the summer of 1908. After they were rejected by the Salon d'Automne (Matisse was a member of the jury), Kahnweiler included them in a one-

[3] Marcel Raymond, *De Baudelaire au surréalisme*, Paris: José Corti, 152, 11. Richard Blackmur's version of Raymond's phrase.

man show of Braque's work in Paris 9-28 November 1908. Louis Vauxcelle, reviewing the show (14 November 1908), states, "He despises form, reduces everything, sites, figures and houses to geometric complexes, to cubes." Matisse had drawn a sketch for him showing him how Braque's paintings were built up out of "petites cubes." Matisse later denied the story, but it is probably true (Golding 1968: 21; 66-67).[4] The first reference to *cubism* is by Charles Morice in an article attacking Braque (16 April 1909) for being "on the whole a victim-setting Cubism aside - of an admiration for Cezanne that is too exclusive or ill-considered." The term became common usage in the press from April 1911 (Golding 1968: 26; Richardson 1996: 450 n. 2). At the beginning, Braque and Picasso hated the word because they thought it did not describe what they were doing, but they ended up using it, although they never took it very seriously and Picasso once told an interviewer, "There is no such thing as cubism" (Richardson 1996: 105).

That the initial reaction to Braque's and Picasso's paintings was (and for many, is) one of rejection, that the early reviews were unfavourable and that *cubism* began as a pejorative term, shows the deep resistance to new art. Frank Stella's black paintings were first exhibited in a show called "Sixteen Americans" at the Museum of Modem Art in 1959. I read all the reviews. After a few cursory remarks on the other painters, every single reviewer spent the rest of the review attacking Stella's paintings. No one liked them. They are now recognised as a major event in the history of painting and hang in major museums around the world. We resist change and resist self-knowledge even more. Very simply, art brings new material to consciousness and most of us find this difficult to accommodate. There is nothing harder than self-knowledge.

Golding calls cubism "perhaps the most important and certainly the most complete and radical artistic revolution since the Renaissance." None of the changes of the past five hundred years "has so altered the principles, so shaken the foundations of Western painting as did Cubism" (Golding 1968: 15). "If social and historical factors can for a moment be forgotten, a portrait by Renoir will seem closer to a portrait by Raphael than it does to a Cubist portrait by Picasso" (Golding 1968: 15). Cubism is "a completely new pictorial language, a completely new way of looking at the outside word, a clearly-defined aesthetic" (Golding 1968: 17).

The new style was the creation of Braque and Picasso, who were joined in 1911 by Juan Gris. Braque and Picasso explored its possibilities for roughly

[4] On Matisse, cf. Richardson 1996: 101.

seven years (1908-1914) before moving onto other things, but the style has had a lasting impact. Richardson declares: "No question about it, Cubism engendered every major modernist movement" Richardson 1996: 106). Objects were reduced to stylized abstract shapes and calligraphic signs, to a sum of more or less disconnected parts. "In cubism," said Picasso, "you paint not what you *see*, but what you *know* is there" (Richardson 1961: 14). Cubism involved an abandonment of perspective, what Braque called "la fausse tradition." He said:

> The whole Renaissance tradition is repugnant to me. The hard-and-fast rules of perspective which it succeeded in imposing on art were a ghastly mistake, which it has taken four centuries to redress; Cezanne and after him Picasso and myself can take a lot of credit for this. Scientific perspective is nothing but eye-fooling illusionism; it is simply a trick - a bad trick - which makes it impossible for an artist to convey a full experience of space, since it forces the objects in a picture to disappear away from the beholder instead of bringing them within his reach, as painting should. Perspective is too mechanical to allow one to take full possession of things. It has its origins in a single viewpoint and never gets away from it.
>
> (Richardson 1961: 10)

Braque and Picasso wanted multiple viewpoints, a single image showing all sides or many sides of an object or person simultaneously. They dispensed with the vanishing point of traditional perspective so that infinite space is represented as finite and this brought the object closer to the viewer. They painted depth out of their pictures so that everything is near the surface within reach of the beholder. Mass, volume, weight and tactility were their values. Braque said he wanted "to make people want to touch what has been painted as well as look at it" (Richardson 1996: 105). "This was," he said, "a means of getting as close to the objects as painting allowed. Fragmentation allowed me to establish a spatial element as well a spatial movement" (Richardson 1961: 10). Braque generated what he called "une espace nouvelle" (Richardson 1996: 47).

Some scholars make a distinction between analytic (1908-1912) and synthetic cubism (1912-1914). The categories were not taken very seriously by Braque and Picasso, but were used by Kahnweiler and Gris. Kahnweiler in his *Der Weg zum Kubismus* (1920) describes Picasso as combining or synthesizing different views of an object into a single image (Golding 1968: 114) and he records Gris as saying in 1920, "My aim is to create new objects which cannot be compared to any object in reality. The difference between analytic and synthetic Cubism lies precisely in this" (qtd. in Golding 1968: 104). The change began with the first papier colle. It is worth noting that Braque

refers to his method as “fragmentation” and that the painting demonstrates a new relation to objects. Showing different perspectives in different points of view and all that you know about an object means including imagination and memory. Moreover, in view of Eliot’s “These fragments I have shored against my ruin” (echoed by Pound in Canto 110/801), it is significant that the painters thought of themselves as taking the object apart and putting it back together again.

Braque was the first to introduce sign painter’s lettering into his paintings in early 1910 and stencilled letters and numerals in the spring of 1911 (Golding 1968: 92). He explained them as follows: “Again with my usual desire to get as near to the reality of things as possible, I started to introduce letters into my pictures. These are forms which could not be deformed, because being two-dimensional, they existed outside three-dimensional space; their inclusion in a picture allowed one to distinguish between objects which were situated in space and those which belonged outside space.” Braque also introduced *trompe I’oeil* nails with shadows into three of his 1910 still lifes (Richardson 1961: text, plate 13). As the paintings were becoming increasingly abstract this was a way of nailing them to reality. For all the radicalness of their views and their readiness to break with convention, both Braque and Picasso rejected abstraction and there was some polemic on the subject in the early days of cubism. Although the painters Gleizes and Metzger in their book, *Du Cubisme* (1912) declared: “The painting imitates nothing and [...] must justify its existence in itself [...] Yet we must admit that reminiscences of natural forms cannot be banished, at least not yet.” The critic Hourcade called it un-French (1912): “our tradition calls for a subject and the originality of Cubism lies precisely in its rejection of the anecdote in order to rediscover the subject” and “it is absolutely false to say that all these painters are turning their backs on nature and want to produce only pure painting” (Golding 1968: 34).

Braque’s family had a house painting business and before he became a painter Braque had spent three years as an apprentice learning the trade. He could do lettering, marbling, wood-graining and every kind of decorative effect and around 1912 he began to use all these techniques in his paintings to give them the illusion of reality, but as with the *trompe I ’oeil* nail and its shadow, he wanted both the illusion and the real. The reality of Braque and Picasso is psychological, composed of objects and fantasy. “In cubism you paint not what you *see*, but what you *know.*” Braque showed Picasso how to use these techniques and by summer 1912 they were both using wood-graining in their paintings. (Richardson 1996: 59-60, 246; Golding 1968: 104). After

1912 they began putting things other than paint in their paintings. Braque saw that despite the radicalness of the changes they had made, they still respected the basic medium: paint and in autumn 1912 he began adding sand to his paint (a habit he would continue to the end of his life) and he experimented with ashes, sawdust, metal filings, coffee grounds, tobacco and grit (Richardson 1961: 17). He also dispensed with the traditional varnishing of a finished painting. If he wanted a passage to shine, he would mix varnish with the paint which gave him the possibility of two different tone values for the same colours (as well as different colours).

Early in 1912 Picasso started using Ripolin, a shiny house paint, in his pictures, and he made the first collage, incorporating a piece of oil cloth printed to look like chair caning into a still life. Braque made the first papier collé at Sorgues early September 1912. He had bought in Avignon a roll of wallpaper that simulated wood-graining and pasted three pieces into his still life, *Fruit Dish and Glass*. "This discovery," Richardson (1961: 17-18) comments, "meant that Braque was able to cross the traditional barrier between sculpture and painting, because his picture became what he and Picasso called a *tableau-objet*, neither mirror-image of nature nor wall decoration, but an autonomous object with an identity of its own." Braque declared: "After having made the [first] papier collé, I felt a great shock, and it was an even greater shock for Picasso when I showed it to him" (Richardson 1996: 249). This is the resistance of the artist, who is after all like us in so many ways, to the new, which is why the genuinely new is so difficult and so rare. As Golding (1968: 180) emphasizes, "what is most remarkable is that in the period before the war, of the Cubist painters, only Picasso, Braque and Gris made any extensive use of *collage* and *papier collé.*" The new was a frontier the others could not cross.

According to Richardson (1996), until Braque showed him *Fruit Dish and Glass*, Picasso had not realized the consequences of his piece of oilcloth with the chair canning:

> An object could now be presented by some foreign element that was an equivalent, as opposed to an image, of itself. A piece of newspaper, for instance, could stand for a newspaper; it could also signify anything else the artist wanted it to signify. Drawing could then function simultaneously and independently to indicate volume and integrate the real element (the piece of newspaper or wallpaper) into the composition. Furthermore, by enabling color to function independently of form, papier collé made it easier for Picasso and Braque to introduce positive color into a cubist composition. And since scissors make for a sharper edge than a paintbrush, they could now achieve much sharper contrasts of color, tone and texture.

Forty years later when Picasso saw *Fruit Dish and Glass* in Douglas Cooper's collection he exclaimed: "*Le Salaud.* He waited until my back was turned. (Cooper's chateau was not far from Avignon.) I'll stop at that wallpaper shop and see what they have left." The story shows not only the rivalry of the two painters, but also that the shock and force of the new was still present.

Braque said papier colle gave him "a kind of certainty" and enabled him to "ground" things. He had also talked of keeping "certitudes," certainties, a sufficient number of realistic elements in his paintings so that viewers would know where they were. By early 1913, Picasso had put a postage stamp in a painting and was using strips of cloth, pieces of paper and occasionally bits of tin or zinc foil. Gris glued a small fragment of mirror to his *Le Lavabo* (1913) (Richardson 1996: 249; Golding 1968: 104). The idea of collage (including papier colle) is that of incorporating already existing objects with their own purposes into a work of art such that they both represent themselves and function as metaphors. They stand for the real, emphasizing the work's material existence at the same time manifesting its status as a work of imagination.

The poets began around this time to put materials of different kinds into their poems. They wrote about objects in new ways and wanted to get closer to them. Events and things were seen in a different perspective related to the rejection of grammar. There is no doubt in my mind that "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (1937), despite Stevens's denials, refers to Picasso's "The Old Guitar Player" and that he is thinking in the poem about the nature of representation in Picasso's paintings and the unity of the person. Section XV begins: "Is this picture of Picasso's, this hoard /of destructions," "a picture of ourselves ...?" Stevens has borrowed Picasso's statement that a picture is a "hoard of destructions" (Rehder 1988: 150-51; 311-12, n. 10). Quotation is the technique that allows poets to come closest to the painters' collages and *The Waste Land* is the work that establishes it in poetry. Facts of different kinds (historical, scientific), depending on how they are used, and the use of foreign languages can also be said to be analogous to the various foreign elements (newspaper, wallpaper, sand) that the painters used.

Eliot quotes from a deliberately heterogeneous variety of texts - poems, plays, scripture, autobiography, opera and popular songs. He quotes in six foreign languages: Latin, Greek, Italian, German, French and Sanskrit as well as English. He quotes Augustine and the Buddha in translation. Moreover, he sometimes quotes without marking it as a quotation and often paraphrases, echoes or rearranges his source. He includes many onomatopoetic words. He also deliberately changes the quality of his own language in passages that are

sometimes almost pastiche or imitation, and which can be seen as comparable to the painted wood-graining of Braque and Picasso. Eliot learned about the imitation of other styles from the instalments of *Ulysses* published in *The Little Review* (March 1918 to December 1920) (Ellmann 1959: 456). Quotation allowed the poets to refer to different past times, which the painters could not do so easily.

Pound in *The Cantos* like Eliot quotes from a great variety of sources in many languages, but is more radical than Eliot in trimming his citations, sometimes to a single word, and like Eliot he includes a variety of voices and frequently changes the tone and quality of his own language. He goes further than Eliot in that he includes more visual elements: there are framed signs (34/171, 71/418), and Canto 22/103 shows a framed sign with a black dot as a nail and the twine holding it up which reminds us of the *trompe I 'oeil* nails of Braque and Picasso and their inclusion of signs and fragments of newspaper. Canto 75 gives the score of a piece of music. He arranges letters as notes on a scale in 82/545 and imitates Renaissance musical notation in 91/630. There are Egyptian hieroglyphics (93/643, 646, 647, 651), the crudely written name of the Persian poet Firdausi in Persian script (77/494), hieroglyphic drawings (97/700, 701, 702) and he puts a Maltese cross in the margin of Canto 42/210 to imitate the sealing of a document. Pound, unlike Eliot, uses letters and different kinds of documents. The most important visual element is the Chinese characters that begin in Canto 34/171 and become increasingly numerous. Pound asked for more characters to be added to the later cantos, but New Directions and Faber ignored his requests because they would be too expensive.

The Cantos is a poem without a plan, or rather, Pound keeps changing his mind about the plan. He writes to Felix Schelling (8 July 1922): “Perhaps as the poem goes on I shall be able to make various things clearer [...] I hope, heaven help me, to bring them [“the colours or elements” he wants for the poem] into some sort of design or architecture later” (Pound 1971: 180). This was before the publication of the first set of thirty in 1930, even so the idea of the form coming later is very strange. However, in February 1939, after the publication of 51 cantos, roughly half the poem, he writes to Herbert Creekmore: “As to the *form* of *The Cantos:* All I can say or pray is: *wait* till its there. I mean wait till I get ’em written and then if it don’t show, I will start exegesis. I haven’t an Aquinas-map, Aquinas NOT valid now” (Pound 1971: 323). It is as if not being able to see the world as an interpreted whole, he could not decide on the order of his poem.

The Cantos are a search for form. The poem's order is improvised. Pound made it up as he went along; however, at the end, he declares: "And I am not a demigod, /1 cannot make it cohere" (106/816). He is like Eliot at the end of *The Waste Land* surrounded by ruins. He could not find the form of his own life. An "Aquinas-map" was his aspiration - a systematic, complete and logically-connected interpretation of the nature of things, but there is neither a religion nor a philosophy in which Pound could believe that could provide such an interpretation. Instead there are intermittently recurring would-be redeeming moments of illumination that are between moments of vivid perception and religious experience. The *Commedia* remained an ideal, but he could not achieve Dante's integration and so was left with disconnected bits and pieces.

The Cantos are the autobiography of a poet who had a profound resistance to self-analysis. This is one reason for the radical fragmentation and disconnection of the poem. That it is an autobiography is one reason why Pound did not settle on any particular plan. He needed to keep the poem open to whatever happened to him next. Although Pound constantly but irregularly uses the first person and describes episodes from his own life, most of the poem is composed of other peoples' stories told by a story teller with a deep resistance to narrative who employs a variety of techniques to make his stories discontinuous and incomplete. He keeps changing stories so as to avoid self-revelation.

Pound justifies this radical disconnectedness in an article on obscurity in the *New Review* (August-September-October 1931): "Certain kinds of depth are obtainable only I suppose with a concision that produces an apparent obscurity. The test is probably: precision. If the phrase is exact the obscurity grows steadily less with increased attention of the reader" (Stock 1970: 376). It is significant that Pound says "the phrase" instead of "the sentence." To commit himself to a complete sentence or sustained narrative is too much like self-revelation. He shortens his phrases for greater immediacy and to hide himself - often, I believe, from himself. He focuses on objects and their qualities.

In one of the three cantos that he wrote and published in 1912 before starting on the present cantos, Pound addresses Robert Browning: "say I take your whole bag of tricks and say the thing's an art form:"

> Your Sordello, and that the modem world
> Needs such a rag-bag to stuff all its thought in,
> Say that I dump my catch, shiny and silvery
> As fresh sardines slapping and slipping on the margin of cobbles?

Pound suggests these lines in a preface to *Selected Cantos* (1966) as perhaps the best introduction to the poem, clearly equating a particular view of the world with a particular literary form (qtd. in Alexander 1979: 135). The idea is that the world is not an ordered or coherent whole, that its objects are thrown together randomly, willy-nilly, stuffed like rags in a bag or dumped like fish on the pavement, that the only form that accurately represents it is that of the rag-bag, one that contains a variety of disconnected, fragmentary, disparate materials. This is the antithesis of "an Aquinas-map." To which may be compared Aaron Copland's statement that "Sibelius does not live in a 20th-century world. He is a hangover from the 1890's [...] his ruminations on life and man are [...] conclusions arrived at from old-fashioned premises, premises that no longer hold water in our time" - another call for new forms appropriate to the new circumstances (Copland 1968: 39).

Valéry, considering what he terms "La Crise de l'esprit," asks: "Et de quoi était fait ce désordre de notre Europe mentale? - De la libre coexistence dans tous les esprits cultivés des idées les plus dissembles, des principes de vie et de connaissance les plus opposés. C'est là ce qui caractérise une époque *moderne."* Writing in 1919, between the publication of Pound's draft canto with the metaphor of the rag-bag (1912) and *The Waste Land* (1922), he sees the culture as defined by being composed of disparate, unrelated elements - fragments. He shares Pound's idea of the rag-bag. Not only the culture, but its individual works (regardless of form) are composed of fragments:

> Dans tel livre de cette époque - et non des plus mediocre - on trouve, sans aucun effort: - une influence des ballets russes, un peu du style sombre de Pascal, -- beaucoup d'impressions du type Goncourt, - quelque chose de Nietzsche, - quelque chose de Rimbaud, - certains effets dus à la fréquentation de peintres, et parfois le ton des publications scientifiques, -le tout perfumé d'un je ne sais pas britainnique difficile à doser.

And he adds that within the components of this mixture one will find many other elements (Valéry 1957: 991-92).

Cubism is a major change in art, but it is part of another major change, probably equally important, if not more so: abstraction. Cubism involved abstraction and many of the subjects of Braque's and Picasso's 1910-11 paintings are very difficult to make out, even when the titles provide a clue, but, as the titles demonstrate, neither painter wanted to forsake the real world. Kandinsky did. He painted what he considered the first completely "non-objective oil painting" (location now unknown) in 1911: *"Bild mit Kreis"* (Roethel and

Benjamin 1982: 38, 391). Thereafter, his best works are abstractions. What is the subject of an abstract painting? One answer is: paint - colour, texture, form. Another answer is: amorphous feelings. Abstractions may be said to be an attempt to get to the origins of things, to primitive, unorganized feelings. Kandinsky's own answer is informative. He declares in *Uber das Geistige in der Kunst* (Concerning the Spiritual [or Intellectual] in Art, 1911):

> When religion, science and morality are shaken, the last two by the strong hand of Nietzsche, and when outer supports threaten to fall, man turns his gaze from externals in on himself. Literature, music and art are the first and most sensitive spheres in which this spiritual [intellectual] revolution makes itself felt.
>
> (Kandinsky 1977: 14)

The shaking was also done by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau and others. For Kandinsky, as for Pound, the old world-view is no longer valid and a new one must be created. Abstract paintings represent the inward gaze. The painter paints the inner not the outer world. The work of the Dada group that met in the Café Voltaire in Zurich in 1916, and André Breton - the ideas set forth in the two surrealist manifestos (1924, 1930) and *Qu'est-ce que le surrealisme?* (1934) - and the work of the artists who rallied to his ideas, were also efforts to get closer to the stream of consciousness and the unconscious by rejecting the old conventions.

During this same period (1907-1912), Schoenberg composed a series of works - the *Three Piano Pieces*, Op. 11 (1909), *Das Buch der hangenden Garten*, Op. 15 (1908-1909), *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16 (1909), *Erwartung*, Op. 17 (1909) and *Pierrot lunaire*, Op. 21 (1912) - that negated all the established principles of musical structure of the last three hundred years, and that, after an eight-year period of silence (1915-1923), enabled him to invent an entirely new musical language. Dissonance is not resolved, the form is obscure and not meant to be grasped, and there is no harmony in the old sense - these are all statements with implied meaning about the nature of things.

The work of Lorine Niedecker (1903-1970), a major American poet who has been largely overlooked, is a particularly interesting example of change of form, although she is trying to put things back together. Known for her very short lyrics, she writes to Cid Corman (14 February 1968):

> I've been going thru a bad time - in one moment (winter) I'd have thrown over all my life (if one can) years of clean-cut, concise short poem manner for "something else" (still don't know what to call it). (Niedecker 1986: 153)

The letter is dated nine months before the publication of *North Central* (1968), her third book that included her first five long poems: "Lake Superior," "Traces of Living Things," "My Life by Water," "Paean to Place" and "Wintergreen Ridge" - and after the composition of the first two poems. Even then she was still in a state of indecision. That Niedecker thinks of "My Life by Water" as a longish poem gives an idea of her sense of scale. Consisting of nine three-line stanzas with very short lines (46 words), it is only just over a page in length. She wrote three more long poems: "Thomas Jefferson," "His Carpets Flowered" (on William Morris) and "Darwin." Four of the first five are clearly autobiographical. The last three are biographical, about other people, but, in one sense, the form is the same, that of the individual human life, which is conceived as a series of unique moments. This is the form of Wordsworth's autobiographical poem and a definition of what it means to be an individual.

There are a few glimpses in Niedecker's surviving letters of her thinking about this major change of form. She tells Corman (18 February 1962) that he and another poet friend:

> Have thrown off the shackles of the sentence and the wide melody. For me the sentence lies in wait - all those prepositions and connectives - like an early spring flood. A good thing my follow-up feeling has always been condense, condense.
>
> (Niedecker 1986: 33)

The sentence is "the wide melody," a spreading, overwhelming flood pushing out the boundaries of the poem such that she must condense to impose limits, boundaries, and make it shorter and clean-cut. For Niedecker the sentence is a long form. Stanzas are not enough. All a poem's words must be within the magnetic field of the sentence's grammar.

Seven months before the letter to Corman about "something else," she is thinking about changing, but searching without finding. She writes to her neighbour, Gail Roub (20 June 1967):

> Much taken up with how to define a way of writing poetry which is not Imagist nor Objectivist fundamentally nor Surrealism alone -[...] I loosely called it "reflections" or as I think it over now, reflective, maybe. The basis is direct and clear - what has been seen or heard, etc. [...]- but something gets in, overlays all that to make a state of consciousness.

Imagist is Pound, Objectivist is Zukofsky. Zukofsky was a former lover and one of her closest friends, Pound is the poet he admired the most. Her concern at the start is to separate herself from what others are doing. She needs to be

independent and has an instinct about what direction to take. Niedecker's early poems show her experimenting with the ideas and techniques of surrealism. She uses the three terms as a kind of shorthand to denote what she does not want. She has her own purposes and is determined to go her own way.

The tendency of all so-called imagist poetry, Pound's imperatives and Zukofsky's theories, is to a minimal presentation of a thing seen. It is a way of avoiding the sentimental, a discipline for managing emotion. Niedecker wants the object, but she also needs the context of its perception and what the mind does to make it meaningful. She begins with "the basis," "direct and clear," but this is finally not enough - she needs the something that "gets in," that "overlays all," the perceiver's "state of consciousness," mood, associations, reflections. Unlike Pound and Zukofsky, who want to remove the perceiver and focus on the object, Niedecker wants to include the state of mind of the act of perception, but to do so without long descriptions of thinking or feeling. She does this by building sequences, as a series of images necessarily brings us closer to the process of seeing and forces us to consider the relationships between objects and their context. "I used to feel," she tells Roub in 1967, "that I was goofing off unless I held only to the hard, clear image, the thing you could put your hand on but now I dare do this reflection" (Roub 1996: 86). Meaning demands longer, more comprehensive structures, like sentences. Although she is part of the tradition of the long poem of fragments inaugurated by *The Waste Land*, Niedecker wants to integrate her fragments. Like the Cubist painters, she has no interest in "metaphysical speculations." Unlike Pound and Eliot, she can believe in the world as it is; scientific explanations however incomplete are enough. She is perhaps unique among major poets in being able to accept without difficulty a materialistic interpretation of the world.

"Thomas Jefferson" and "Darwin" are poems that try to establish how their protagonists found meaning in their lives. With Jefferson she is interested in his sense of beauty, his abilities as an architect, his curiosity about the world and his relations with other people. His politics are taken for granted. The work is composed of nineteen short poems, usually of two or three stanzas and very short lines. Three sections (II, III and XIX) are of short three-line stanzas and four (VIII, X, XII, XIV) are of two-line stanzas, the other twelve each have their own form. This variety of forms and multiplicity of sections indicates, I believe, a recognition of the uniqueness of each moment of experience and the problematic nature of any statement about unity of character. The details of Jefferson's life - and small details are of the greatest importance in these small poems - are drawn, for the most part, from Jefferson's letters. She abridges,

condenses and paraphrases Jefferson in the seven poems in the first person. The rest are in the third person (VI can be seen as combining the two). The alternation between *I* and *he* means that we see Jefferson both from the inside and the outside. (Multiple perspectives are a characteristic of Braque's and Picasso's cubist paintings, and their 1911 portraits show the subject as a sum of many parts).

The result is a series of more or less self-contained short poems that are neither only images nor anecdotes and not exactly moments. Four and sixteen, for example, are slightly out of time, or, rather, cannot be assigned to any specific time. Each poem is a new beginning - this is a major advantage of a longer poem in sections - a new attempt to show Jefferson as a person, not trying to summarize him as a whole, but considering his many-sided character one or two facets at a time. Consequently, the sum is greater than the parts and presents us with the form of a human life that although all of a piece, is, within limits, open to change, heterogeneous, contradictory, amorphous, and in a state of tension and process. The form of "Thomas Jefferson" is essentially that of Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, except that Wordsworth feels the need to write connecting passages where Niedecker condenses and deliberately leaves spaces between the units and avoids trying to impose a single form. Wordsworth in all the major MSS of his long poem also leaves spaces between verse paragraphs. Wordsworth's need to analyze in order to understand his feelings causes him to describe at length and mark the nuances. Niedecker wants to denote them by a single word, phrase, image or metaphor. She works to a different rigour. Too many words get in the way.

The fourth poem is a good example:

Latin and Greek
my tools
to understand
humanity

I rode horse
away from a monarch
to an enchanting
philosophy (Niedecker 2002: 276)

Niedecker maintains a nice balance between a minimal definiteness: *Latin, Greek, tools* and *monarch* and the abstract generality of *understand, humanity* and *enchanting philosophy*. The first stanza is a statement, the second, an image. The stanzas end with rhyming abstractions. They are not connected and anyone

who knows anything about Jefferson knows that his philosophy was that of the Declaration of Independence's "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," the Bill of Rights and a view of rural life that owed something perhaps to the classics, but probably more to Rousseau. Jefferson's heroes were Bacon, Locke and Newton, not Plato and Aristotle. He studied Latin and Greek like most educated men of his time, but he thought "Their acquisition should be the occupation of our early years only" and they would certainly not be useful "to all men" (Jefferson 1984: 1423-24). Niedecker constructs her own Jefferson.

Latin and Greek as "tools" remind us of Jefferson's practical side and his skills as a handyman and inventor. Their specificity is set against the abstract generality of "understanding humanity" in the same way that "I rode horse / away from a monarch" is set against "an enchanting philosophy." "I rode horse" is old fashioned. Niedecker makes "away from" into a destination. "Enchanting" suggests the delight, beauty and temptation of philosophy, almost as if Jefferson were under a spell. She converts mental events into physical metaphors *(tools, rode, horse)* and transfers the action to an abstract never-never land.

Niedecker does not worry about connection. The individual parts of "Thomas Jefferson" (and most of her longer poems) are only loosely connected. The sequence matters, but it is a personal rather than a necessary order, psychological, if one likes, rather than any other kind of logic. "Thomas Jefferson" is vaguely chronological, if one overlooks the composite nature of most of the parts, "Darwin" is emphatically not. Eliot in *The Waste Land* juxtaposes different kinds of material, different languages, different textures, Niedecker rarely does this. She puts things side by side not for simple contrasts or to break the narrative in any obvious way, but because she thinks the relation of the parts is self-evident. This is her economy, her Occam's razor. The sections are loosely connected and composite because she believes in the irregularity and angularity of life, and the fluidity of consciousness. She has found her new forms in the stream of consciousness. She writes longer poems in order to get more ideas into them, more meaning. "Thomas Jefferson" is not like Wordsworth's autobiographical poem composed of moments that are located in space and time. Many of them refer to or imply several different times and places. When this happens in Wordsworth or Proust, the events are connected by memory. There is no suggestion of this in Niedecker. The individual units are collages. The citations can be compared to the newspaper and wallpaper pasted into their paintings by Braque and Picasso. Her units assemble and compact different moments. They resemble Braque's new spaces. She has Braque's desire to touch, to put her hand on things. Like Wordsworth, she writes longer poems in order

to include many moments and reflect on their relationship, and on the form of a human life as a whole. Unlike Wordsworth, in her autobiographical poems she is not worried about wholeness and does not feel divided, and in the poems about others, that all the events belong to one person is enough to unify them.

Niedecker's "Darwin" differs from "Thomas Jefferson" in that it confronts Darwin's major ideas and in that she uses the same stanza form throughout: three stair-step lines, the second inset from the first, the third, from the second and a fourth line indented half-way between the first and second. This fourth line usually establishes some kind of conclusion and the form creates a definite rhythm for the poem as a whole. Most of the specific events mentioned occurred on Darwin's around the world voyage on *H.M.S. Beagle* (1831-1836).

This is the fifth and final section:

I remember, he said
those tropical nights at sea -
we sat and talked
on the booms

Tierra del Fuego's
shining glaciers translucent
blue clear down
(almost) to the indigo sea

(By the way Carlyle
thought it was most ridiculous
anyone should care
whether a glacier

moves a little quicker
or a little slower
or moved at all)
Darwin

sailed out
of Good Success Bay
to carcass -
conclusions -

the universe
not built by brute force
but designed by laws
The details left

to the workings of chance
'Let each man hope
and believe
what he can' (Niedecker 2002: 298-99)

Niedecker has spliced together part of Darwin's letter of 1861 or 1862 to P. G. King, who had been a midshipman on the *Beagle',* "the remembrance of old days when we used to sit and talk on the booms will always to the day of my death, make me glad to hear of your happiness and prosperity" and King's comments to Francis Darwin on the pleasure his father used to take "pointing out to me as a youngster the delights of tropical nights" (Darwin F. 1958: 134).

The language describing the Tierra del Fuego glaciers appears to be Niedecker's own elaboration of Darwin's. He writes in *The Voyage of the Beagle'.*

> In many parts, magnificent glaciers extend from the mountain side to the water's edge. It is scarcely possible to imagine anything more beautiful than the beryl-like blue of these glaciers, and especially as contrasted with the dead white of the upper expanse of snow. (Darwin 1962: 225)

Beryl, according to the Shorter Oxford, is "a transparent precious stone of a pale-green colour passing into light blue" and as a colour, "pale sea-green" (1831). Darwin marks the contrast between the beryl-blue glaciers and "the dead white" snow, Niedecker, between the "translucent / blue" glaciers and "the indigo sea." *Shining* goes with *translucent* and both are reinforced by *clear.* The parenthetical *almost* is a nice bit of imaginary accuracy and causes the description to seem more authentic.

The Carlyle anecdote is borrowed from Darwin's autobiography. He met him several times and writes: "His mind seemed to me a very narrow one; even if all branches of science, which he despised, are excluded." "He thought it a most ridiculous thing that any one should care whether a glacier moved a little quicker or a little slower, or moved at all." Niedecker omits Darwin's next sentence: "As far as I could judge I never met a man with a mind so ill adapted for scientific research" (Darwin C. 1958: 112-14). Carlyle stands for the resistance to a scientific view of the world, where by implication the smallest details are significant, the "(almost)" blue and the glacier's "little quicker / or a little slower." Darwin was a master of detail, rigorous and obsessive. "I am a complete millionaire in odd and curious facts," he told Hooker in 1864 (Darwin F. 1958: 281). His theories were based on his meticulous collection of

materials and experiments. They are his "carcass-conclusions." Niedecker tells the story of the African cat carcass at the end of section IV. She has Darwin writing to Lyell. Actually the letter was to his second cousin, W. D. Fox (25 January 1841): "Don't forget if your half-bred African cat should die, that I would be very much obliged for its carcase sent up in a little hamper for skeleton" (Darwin 1986: 2. 279). She condenses and smoothes the sentence. Good Success Bay is at the tip of Tierra del Fuego. The *Beagle* anchored there on 17 December 1832.

Niedecker ends the poem with a comprehensive statement on the nature of the universe that she takes from Darwin's letter to Asa Gray (22 May 1860). Darwin says that "with respect to the theological view of the question:"

> This is always painful to me. I am bewildered. I had no intention to write atheistically. But I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express purpose of feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed.

The standard argument for design had been put forward in his *Natural Theology* (1802) by Paley. His most famous example was that the human eye was too complicated to be the result of chance. Paley's works were set for Darwin's final examinations at Cambridge.

Darwin goes on to say:

> On the other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion *at all* satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the subject is too profound for the human intellect. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton. Let each man hope and believe what he can. (Darwin F. 1958: 249)

Niedecker has simplified and condensed Darwin's statements, paring it down to its essentials, leaving out his hesitations and doubts, and his further statement that his views are "not at all necessarily atheistical" because it can be argued that the laws may have been designed this way by "an omniscient Creator." Niedecker gives us a straight forward materialistic view. Her reformulation of Darwin is deft and subtle. The universe - this goes way beyond *The Origin*

of Species - is an ordered unity. *Brute force* is strange as an alternative to the six days of creation in Genesis. This would appear to be random force, force without laws. "[DJesigned by laws / the details left / to the workings of chance" affirms the order without saying anything about the origin of the laws. *Workings* suggests deliberation and purpose, "workings of chance" builds a certain amount of unpredictability into the inevitability of *laws*, structure without determinism, with a contingent freedom and variety. At the end of the poem, belief is free and Niedecker sees clearly its relation to hope. She (and Darwin) leave it up to the individual. By implication the ready made answers of religion and philosophy are set aside. Each person does the best they can in responding to the difficulties of understanding the world.

Between 1908 and 1922 there are major developments in art, music and literature that radically change the nature of representation. The fragment becomes a form. Narratives are discontinuous or held together in new ways. There is a new sense of what constitutes a whole. These events are a result of a change in the way of apprehending the world. The First World War was not, as is sometimes said, a primary cause, rather a symptom. If we think about causes, the most obvious major change before this is the introduction of the idea of quanta into physics. "In writing the history of the intellectual world," Louis de Broglie declares, "there have been few upheavals comparable to this" (Broglie 1953: 24). Braque, Picasso and Gris "were intent on interpreting the world in new pictorial terms," which were, as Golding puts it, "anti-naturalistic but representational." "Their vision," he states, "was untouched by any literary or romantic considerations, and they ignored all forms of metaphysical speculation" (Golding 1968: 177). Every view of the world, however, makes assumptions about the nature of things, and although these assumptions are often half-conscious or unconscious, they enter into the determination of the form of a work of art.

The painting for Braque is an independent, untranslatable object. "To explain away the mystery of a great painting - if such a feat were possible - would do irreparable harm, for whenever you explain or define something you substitute the explanation or definition for the real thing." "You see," he told Richardson, "I have made a great discovery: I no longer believe in anything. Objects do not exist for me except in so far as a *rapport* exists between them and myself. In other words, it is not objects that matter to me, but what is between them: it is this 'in-between' that is the real subject of my pictures" (Richardson 1961: 23-24). This is another way of saying that he paints his experience, his consciousness. He looks for "poetry" in art, a quality which he says cannot be

defined. He finds in the process of painting and the completed object a "state of harmony between things and oneself' - a state of mind he himself creates, personal and which cannot be shared. For Braque, the painting explains nothing.

The thirteen years before Braque painted the first Cubist picture saw the beginning of a revolution in physics, the most important change in the way scientists viewed the physical world since Newton's *Principia* (1687). The equation that Planck wrote for black-body radiation in 1900 marks the end of classical physics as established by Newton. This is the radiation emitted by a body, regardless of its composition, that absorbs all the radiation it receives (and reflects none). Planck had wanted to show that the second law of thermodynamics that entropy increases is an absolute, instead he had to use Boltzmann's statistical interpretation of that law: that it is extremely probable, but not absolutely certain. Then, in order to make his formula fit the experimental data, he also had to assume, contrary to the well-established wave theory of light, that energy was discontinuous and moved in small, discrete, intermittent bursts that he named "quanta." At first Planck did not understand the full consequences of his theory and later spent many years trying to undo its revolutionary character. The person who saw its consequences most clearly was Einstein, then a clerk in the Swiss Patent Office in Bern: "All my attempts [...] to adapt the theoretical foundation of physics to this knowledge failed completely. It was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with no firm foundation to be seen anywhere, upon which one could have built" (Pais 1986: 130).[5]

Planck's equation is one of a series of discoveries concerning different types of radiation (x-rays, 1895; radioactivity, 1896; alpha and beta rays, 1899; gamma rays, 1900; the photoelectric effect, 1905) that showed the instabilities of matter and demanded a re-examination of its basic structure. The electron was found in 1887/1899, the atomic nucleus, in 1911. These discoveries showed that matter is composed of very small atomic and subatomic particles, not exactly fragments, as the particles were related by their energies, but the physicists took the world apart in a way analogous to the Cubist painters. The direction of their research, like those of the artists, was inward. Quantum physics suggests that things are discontinuous. At this same time, Freud was beginning his study of invisible forces. *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in 1899. Dada and surrealism are clearly a response to Freud's work.

Pais states: "The era of the old quantum mechanics [1900-1925] [...] constitutes the most protracted revolutionary period in modem science." Six

[5] On Planck, see Cline 1987: 31-63; Broglie 1953: 99-121; Pais 1986: 129-134.

theoretical papers appeared that were revolutionary in the sense "that they contain at least one theoretical step which (whether the [...] authors knew it then or not) could not be justified at the time of writing" and where it "was not yet clear which parts" of the older physics could be reintegrated in a new frame:

> Planck's [...] discovery of the quantum theory (1900); Einstein's on the light quantum (1905); Bohr's on the hydrogen atom (1913); Bose's on what came to be called quantum statistics (1924); Heisenberg's on what came to be known as matrix mechanics (1925); and Schroedinger's on wave mechanics (1926).

"The introduction of probability in the sense of quantum mechanics - that is, probability as an inherent feature of fundamental physical law - may well be," Pais writes (in 1986), "the most drastic scientific change yet effected in the 20th century." For him, this revolution comes to an end in 1927 with Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Bohr's idea of complementarity (Pais 1986: 250-51). The interest in surrealism tends to fade after this time and the period of radical change in literary form comes to an end. *The Sound and the Fury* is published in 1929, *As I Lay Dying*, 1930 and *Absalom, Absalom*, 1936, although it can be argued that everything is already there in *Ulysses* (1922) and *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). Heisenberg shows that the presence of the observer limits what can be known *(The Sound and the Fury* presents an interesting analogue), and Bohr believes that it is necessary to accept the wave/quantum duality, to live with two irreconcilable ways of looking at the same thing. Both ideas can be used metaphorically to indicate some of the problems that authors have with first person narrators after Proust.

Bertrand Russell, who was very aware of the revolution in physics, sees a change in the practice of philosophy at this time. The new philosophy which he calls "the philosophy of logical analysis" or "modem analytical empiricism" (now usually shortened to "analytic philosophy") "differs from that of Locke, Berkeley and Hume by its incorporation of mathematics and development of a powerful logical technique" such that some of its answers have "the quality of science." "It has the advantage as compared with the philosophies of the system-builders, of being able to tackle its problems one at a time, instead of having to invent at one stroke a block theory of the whole universe. Its methods in this respect resemble those of science" (Russell 1945: 834). Problems "one at a time" means that it works on fragments. As with the new painting, new music and new physics, there is a need to re-establish the fundamentals of the subject. This re-thinking can be approximately dated from Russell's *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) which sets out to prove that

"pure mathematics deals exclusively with concepts definable in terms of a very small number of fundamental logical concepts, and that all its propositions are deductible from a very small number of fundamental logical principles" (Russell 1903: xv). Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* that tries to elaborate a formal demonstration of these ideas (the title indicates its ambition) is published in 1910. Russell attempts to put mathematics (and philosophy) on a new basis, solider and more rigorous, and his logic is, in a sense, a new language. He summarizes the consequences of the new physics for philosophy in *The Analysis of Matter* (1927).

Form has a meaning, even if we cannot say very much about it. *The Waste Land* is a poem of fragments, deliberately disconnected and juxtaposed. What Eliot says about the state of European culture, the failure of communication and relationships, the isolation of the individual, and the meaningless of the individual life is unambiguous and helps us to understand the form. The structure and techniques imply certain ideas and what the words say guides the reader in interpreting the meaning of the form, although there is only a very limited amount in most cases that can be said. The structure, techniques and disorder of *The Cantos* and Pound's inability to finish tell a similar story. When Schoenberg was hoping Oscar Levant would give the first performance of his Piano Concerto, Op. 42 (1942), he jotted down "a few explanatory phrases" to help Levant approach the work's four movements:

> Life was easy
> Suddenly hatred broke out
> A grave situation was created
> But life goes on

I suspect that few if any listeners would be able to give such a succinct account unprompted. MacDonald, who tells the story, calls it "a fair summary of the Concerto's emotional progression" and goes on to say that anyone who explores Schoenberg's output in depth "becomes aware that a very large proportion of his works, from all periods of his career, seem to embody different forms of the same experiential pattern" (MacDonald 1976: 217-18). The example suggests the limited amount of interpretation that is possible, as well as the idea that all of an artist's works have the unity of his experience. What else does an artist have except his experience?

Schoenberg writes: "There is only one greatest goal toward which the artist strives: to express himself." He did not invent a new music for the sake of change. "I personally hate to be called a revolutionary, which I am not. What

1 did was neither revolutionary nor anarchy." "I am a conservative who was forced to become a radical" (Machlis 1982: 137; 243). Pais (1986: 131-32) writes that he is struck "by the number of middle-aged men" who played major roles in the quantum revolution. "They were not young Turks out to set the world on fire, but rather seasoned pros, systematically extending and refining work done by their experimentalist predecessors. Revolution was not on their minds, it was alien to them." Picasso told Zervos: "When we invented cubism, we had no intention whatever of inventing cubism. We simply wanted to express what was in us" (Richardson 1996: 105). Braque said to Richardson: "Cubism, or rather my cubism, was a means I created for my own use, whose primary aim was to put painting within the range of my own gifts" (Richardson 1961: 9). Nonetheless, like everybody else, the artist lives his life in the world and as Kandinsky points out, when an intellectual revolution takes place, music, art and literature are "the first and most sensitive spheres" in which it "makes itself felt" (Kandinsky 1977: 14). "Art," says Schoenberg (1910), "is the cry of distress uttered by those who experience at first hand the fate of mankind [...] The world revolves within - inside them: what bursts out is merely the echo - the work of art!" (Reich 1971: 56-57). And he has Aaron sing in Act 2 of *Moses und Aaron:* "You cannot expect the Form before the Idea, / For they will come into being together." (MacDonald 1976: 58, 63). Let each man hope - make - and believe what he can.

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Ambiguity or "The Eye of Mere Observation" in Malory's *Morte Darthur*

All undergraduates know that Malory's great book of chivalric ideals was apparently written by a rogue who was at leisure to write because he spent much of his time in prison for *not* living up to those ideals. Theft, attempted murder, ambush, rape ... Malory was far too busy committing the seven deadly sins to find time to read *The Seven Types of Ambiguity.* And I am ready to wager that you were not expecting Malory's name to crop up very often at a conference devoted to ambiguity. Least of all did you imagine that he would be the subject of a plenary paper.

You may not have been reading *Le Morte Darthur* recently, but most people have memories of Malory as not exactly a complex writer. His was certainly not a complex mind. His knights and ladies inhabit a world of surface meaning, a simple world of clear-cut values, where the good are good and the bad are definitely not. There are dastardly villains and exemplary heroes, but there's nothing much in between. Very little is ever a matter of opinion, left open to interpretation, as though Malory had had uncommon success in his search for meaning, and was able to present everything in its appropriate, unambiguous category. The book, of course, is full of strange, bewildering adventures and apparently inexplicable mysteries, but once the adventures have been achieved and the inexplicable mysteries conveniently explained, meanings are usually perfectly clear, and moral significances certainly are. Malory's world is a black and white world where nothing much is ever grey, and I always think that, in this, the illustrations of Aubrey Beardsley are splendidly emblematic, even though their effete aestheticism is a million away miles from *Le Morte Darthur)*

The simplicity of this world without nuance explains to a large extent the divided opinion that surrounds Malory's book: *Le Morte Darthur* is far from universally admired. It has survived and been read almost continually for over five centuries and several editions of it are available today, but not

[1] Malory's perfect illustrator, I believe, would have been his Italian contemporary Paolo Uccello. The next time you mm to *Le Morte Darthur,* look at some of Uccello's battle paintings first to put you in the mood.

all teachers of literature regard it highly, not even all medievalists. Some of them, of course, regard it very highly, while others, although they are willing to accept, albeit grudgingly, that it is one of the great books of the English literary tradition, dismiss it rather hastily. Books of adventure are all well and good, but there is something insubstantial about *Le Morte Darthur,* something basically unsatisfying. To put it baldly, there is just so little intellectual depth. The soldier-scholar Sir Philip Sidney claimed that "honest King Arthur will never displease a soldier" (Sidney 1965: 127) and in so doing he perhaps characterised Malory's readership with great precision. This is a book for men of action not men of thought and, ultimately, there's something even boyish rather than manly about Malory's enthusiasms and commitments, which explains why *Le Morte Darthur* has always been one of the great books for boys - although, of course, in the nineteenth century it had to be bowdlerised first. Even then, it is the ideal book for the sort of boy who likes sports and adventure before he turns to more intellectual pursuits. And when he does, there is not much in Malory to hold on to. Consequently, in an age that values difficulty in literature and in which ambiguity is an essential element of the rich texture of a literary work, Malory seems sadly out of his depth.

We can go even further: it is not merely that subtlety and nuance do not seem to be his cup of tea, Malory seems positively to close his eyes to shades of meaning and contradictions, and even the (amusingly ironic) contradiction between the ideals he cherished and the turgid life of crime that he lived (or the life we credit him with since the biographical identification is not quite a certitude) seems not to have given him pause. We might have expected him to be the last person to want to be too categorical, just the man to encourage multiple, alternative points of view. *Au contraire:* if anything, Malory is the perfect example of the fact that books are the product of what Proust called the "1'autre moi" (Proust 1957: 137); the actual life of an author is of precious little relevance to his work. Malory the rogue might well have asked us to avoid simple-minded judgements, to give him the benefit of the doubt; but Malory the author will hear nothing of compromise, excuses or extenuating circumstances. And as for ambiguity -1 am convinced that he would have had nothing to do with it. It was a word that had only recently appeared in English in the fifteenth century. "Precisely," one imagines him saying. "Newfangled, newfangled, that's what it is!"

Malory's refusal of ambiguity produces a clearsightedness - or do I mean narrowness of vision? - which is disarming for many modem readers, and which explains, I would suggest, why his book is patronised more than it is

admired. Although Lancelot is fully aware that certain members of the court are doing all they can to expose his relationship with Guenevere, he refuses none the less to cancel a night-time tryst -1 shall deal with this incident again, more fully, presently; for the moment I have one point to make. When, sword in hand no less, he is on his way - alone - to keep an assignation with a married woman in her apartments at night, Malory writes "and so in his mantle that *noble* knight put himself in great jeopardy" (2. 460). The emphasis is mine but it is hardly necessary; the adjective is so astonishingly out of place because there is not the slightest analysis of the gap between intention and performance, between what Lancelot is intending to accomplish and the nobility in which the author dresses him as he sets out to accomplish it. No one asks if in circumstances like these putting oneself in jeopardy is a sign of nobility or a downright lack of common sense. There is nothing other than a face-value acceptance of a nobility that, unquestioningly, is imposed upon us, taken for granted as a given element of the story. There is no examination or querying of Lancelot's nobility, no attempt to assess it on a scale of human achievement. Perhaps fifteenth-century readers found this unenquiring commitment to goodness more palatable, whereas the centuries that have intervened have made us far more at home with a more measured honour. We can see the terrible ambiguity of Lancelot's situation and are ready to look it in the face. For Malory, it is something one should not be able to see and he sweeps it under the carpet. We have become accustomed to flawed heroes. We accept feet of clay. We no longer mind them; perhaps we have even come to expect them. Indeed, heroes who have them are all the more endearing with that common humanity that our common humanity reacts warmly to.

But Malory will have none of this and his refusal to see the ambiguities of the situation, his refusal to propose extenuating circumstances proves tiresome to many readers, who would prefer a little more authorial discrimination and less authorial tyranny. But Malory will not budge. He is not even ready to admit that the love of Lancelot and Guenevere, illicit though it might have been, was so all-consuming, so entire in its devotion that it can be excused and understood, that it can be placed in a category of its own. Of course it is in a category of its own, but he will have no truck with that word "illicit." And there is no ambiguity, just the possibility of our misreading, which it is his duty to prevent by making things perfectly explicit. If we think we have spotted an ambiguity, the possibility of an alternative interpretation, Malory puts us on the right path by simply telling us, quite unashamedly, what to think. The search for truth is by no means difficult, as long as you can see the truth when it is presented to

you. “While she lived she was a true lover,” Malory says of Guenevere, “and therefore she had a good end” (2. 426). It is as simple as that.

But this verdict is far too simple for the liking of many readers, who find that Malory’s unenquiring mind impoverishes a book which could have been otherwise much richer, more deeply human, if Malory had not side-stepped the complex moral issues that the narrative material brings to the fore. But that is precisely what he does, and although at one point he refers to Lancelot as “the truest lover of a sinful man” (2. 530), apparently ready to take into account a category where ambiguity might prosper - the best of the sinful - this turns out to be no more than a passing glance at a complexity with which he never comes to terms, unwilling to deal at length, we must conclude, with distinctions his readers are more than likely to misconstrue. For what other conclusion can we draw from one of the most famous passages in the book? If you have forgotten much of *Le Morte Darthur*, you have presumably not forgotten this. At least, only the slightest reminder will jog your memory. It is the incident I have already mentioned.

Events are reaching a climax and Agravain and Mordred, Arthur’s wanton nephews, are determined to cause trouble by revealing the adulterous nature of the relationship between Lancelot and the Queen. Imprudently, the lovers arrange to meet at night in the Queen’s apartments and the troublemakers turn up banging on the door convinced they now have the indisputable evidence they were looking for: Lancelot and Guenevere caught in *flagrante delicto* in bed together. But there’s a snag: they cannot gain entrance to the room to take the lovers in adultery; there is no evidence, and to prevent us from aligning ourselves with the troublemakers and sharing their suspicions Malory writes, “and whether they were abed or at other manner of disports, me list not hereof make no mention, for love that time was not as love is nowadays” (2.460). My goodness! What do we have here? Could this be a touch of ambiguity after all? Right at the climax of the book. What can Malory be thinking about? Have we been too hasty in saying that his knights inhabit an unambiguous world?

Perhaps we have, for Malory certainly does not choose clarity here. Indeed, he positively draws our attention to a question that cries out to be asked, and then refuses to answer it. Withholding information is not ambiguity; what is ambiguous is that we know the answer to the question - Malory has given us too much information already - but he wants that answer to be capable of an alternative interpretation.

We might wonder what was there to stop him from saying that the lovers were *not* in bed together - since he is so obviously convinced of the honourable

nature of their love? Perhaps, as a serious historian Malory feels that he cannot distort the truth since his French source text (Frappier 1964: 143, §90) states clearly that the lovers were, indeed, in bed (what else would you expect of a French book after all?). Except that Malory modifies his French book elsewhere when it suits his purpose and is ready to claim that it corroborates what he is saying when it certainly does not. There was no *a priori* reason why he could not edit his material here, in line with his own moral standards.

Perhaps we should argue that the source material - the history of Arthur - was too well known for Malory to tamper with it, especially over such a crucial detail. And perhaps that is true although I am not so sure. Malory was, after all, producing an English version of the story because little or nothing was available - or widely available in English, and since his "translation" was fulfilling a real need, we can hardly claim that the French texts had made the story so well-known since very few people in fifteenth century England would have been able to read them.

But I believe that Malory makes no attempt to cover up the truth - indeed he draws attention to it by withholding the information - because he saw no need. The devotion of the lovers in his eyes was entirely honourable and the precise details of the private relationship were matters that did not concern the court historian or the court. Malory's attitude of perfect loyalty makes him overlook or fail to see accessory details that might cheapen and misrepresent something entirely fine. For the ability to see other meanings, the perception of ambiguities, is part and parcel not of a richness of meaning and a depth of perception; in *the Morte Darthur* it is a symptom of a poverty of spirit, a merely objective point of view that dissects without discernment, and which has lost sight of all that is of value in the world. And Malory categorically refuses to look with what we might call the "eye of mere observation."

My quotation, you have guessed, comes from an entirely different work of literature, but the point being made, I believe, is precisely the same. It is another night-time episode that must be hidden from the eyes of those who will not understand. Tess has stolen back to the graveyard to leave a home-made cross and a few flowers on the grave of her dead baby: "What matter was it that on the outside of the jar the eye of mere observation noted the words 'Keelwell's marmalade'? The eye of maternal affection did not see them in its vision of higher things" (Hardy 1957: 125).

"The eye of mere observation" sees that grave for what it is: a little bastard's grave. And the eye of mere observation is right. But at the same time so desperately wrong. A sin has been exposed and duly labelled if you must; but

so has the blackness of society's heart, which is grudging, barren, mean-spirited and cold. Of course, the letter of the law is on society's side, but we don't need telling: the letter killeth.

Malory could have made the lovers blameless and robbed the villains of all evidence, but he had no need to do so. In his eyes Lancelot and the Queen are innocent (just as Tess is, indeed, a "pure woman"[2]), and the real evil lies in the interpretation of the troublemakers, bent on destruction, but with nothing more than ambiguity to use as a weapon. Singleness of purpose and of vision is Malory's ideal; the knowing look of those who see multiple meanings is, ultimately, distorted and - what could be worse? - destructive.

And so rather than claim that Malory creates an unambiguous world of surface meaning, perhaps we could consider the matter from another point of view, perhaps we could suggest that he integrates ambiguity into his material because he regularly associates it with evil. It is the ill-intentioned, ill-thinking characters who seek to destroy who can see alternative interpretations only too clearly, while those who are truly devoted and loyal to the Arthurian ideal see, not with blinkered eyes - that would be the enemy point of view - but with eyes that are single-mindedly and finely focused on that truth which is the "hyeste thyng that man may kepe," as another fine knight said in other circumstances (Chaucer 1957: 143).

But here I would like to examine one well-known example in greater detail to see how Malory exploits the ambiguities of a situation in which, once again, Lancelot and the Queen find themselves in danger. It is the episode in which Guenevere is lodged with her wounded knights at Meliagaunt's castle when Lancelot comes to rescue her (2. 425-446) and it is of particular significance, I believe, in that Malory has taken the incident out of its original context. In the French sources it is one of the early incidents of the Arthurian kingdom and is part of the *Lancelot en prose*, the third branch of the Vulgate cycle. Malory gives the voluminous *Lancelot en prose* rather short shrift - the gushing, lachrymose Lancelot of the early books was not his kind of hero, a bit too much of a French sissy for his taste I suspect - but he retains this episode, which he fits into the very end of his history, making it the second of a series of three incidents from which Guenevere needs to be rescued.

You recall what has happened here. Meliagaunt has kidnapped the Queen (in the absence of Lancelot of course) while she was out Maying with her personal bodyguard of ten knights, who, though considerably outnumbered,

[2] The novel's subtitle, of course.

fight bravely to defend her. They are severely wounded and the Queen gives in to Meliagaunt to save her knights, from whom she refuses to be separated. They are to be lodged in her chambers, she insists. Meanwhile, Lancelot has been informed of the events and, having escaped the ambush which had been set for him, arrives at the castle. Meliagaunt - we hardly need telling - has cravenly asked for the Queen to intervene on his behalf and Lancelot, itching for a fight, is somewhat irritated to learn that the Queen has negotiated terms, until she reassures him: "I accorded never unto him for favour nor love that I had unto him, but for to lay down every shameful noise" (2. 435). She is aware that they live in a world where people are constantly seeking to misread the evidence. "Madam ... so ye be pleased I care not, as for my part ye shall soon please" (2. 436) says Lancelot cryptically, in preparation for the second part of the story, which is what interests me here.

The lovers arrange to meet at night and Lancelot climbs up to Guenevere's window with the aid of a ladder he had spotted earlier. Unfortunately, iron bars protect the window, but the lovers are so keen to spend time together that Lancelot puts his strength to the test "for [Guenevere's] love" and pulls the bars "clean out of the stone walls" (2.438), cutting his arm to the bone in the process. Like the ideal lover he is, he pays no attention to a mere scratch of the sort, even when it bleeds profusely, but he "went unto bed with the queen" (2. 438)
- Malory tells us plainly this time, since the ambiguity will be elsewhere:

> and he took no force of his hurt hand, but took his pleasance and his liking until it was the dawning of the day; and wit you well he slept not but watched, and when he saw his time that he might tarry no longer he took his leave and departed at the window, and put it together as well as he might again. (2. 438)

Since they all sleep unusually late, Meliagaunt comes to wake the Queen and, seeing her bed stained with blood, interprets the evidence according to the workings of his own devious mind: the queen has obviously shared her bed with her wounded knights, or some of them, or at the very least one of them
- Meliagaunt is almost overwhelmed by the number of possible accusations. After all, why else did she make such a point of keeping them with her? What a godsend for the caddish Meliagaunt, who can now hope to be upstaged in treachery by the queen herself.

The accusation is, of course, preposterous and the wounded knights deny it vigorously. Who but a bounder like Meliagaunt could even imagine that "this most noble Christian Queen" (2. 461), could possibly betray her husband in such a disgraceful manner? But Meliagaunt is so sure that he has read the

incriminating signs correctly that he remains blind to all the clues to which Malory has drawn our attention. He never dreams of asking where the blood-stains come from if one of the wounded knights has *not* shared the queen's bed, and Malory interestingly ignores the logical explanation that is offered in a similar incident in one of the French sources - that the lady has had a nose bleed during the night. But, as we might expect, ladies in French texts are far more worldly and are expert in the art of pooh-poohing accusations of adultery; Malory's Queen is far too honest to lie, just as she is far too virtuous to sleep with one of her wounded knights. And when they all deny the charges, Meliagaunt never thinks to ask if any other knights have been injured recently. He never notices the makeshift repair job on the broken window, and most of all he never notices the most telling detail, to which Malory is careful to draw our attention.

When Lancelot had returned to his chambers, his friend Sir Lavayne had "dressed his hand and staunched it, and put upon it a glove, that it should not be espied" (2.438). When he arrives on the scene of the accusation no one pays the slightest attention to the glove, no one asks why he has suddenly started wearing one. And when Meliagaunt finally challenges Lancelot to combat to prove the Queen's honour, he says "here is my glove that [the Queen] is a traitress to my lord, King Arthur." Lancelot certainly does not throw down his own glove in defiance (how could he, of course), but merely replies, a tad tamely: "Well, sir, and I receive your glove" (2. 440).

I have had to leave out a lot of the incident but perhaps I ought to add that the insistence on gloves stands out in particular for the simple reason that there are almost no other gloves (or gauntlets) elsewhere in Malory. In this world of knightly challenges, one might have expected gloves to be flying and that Camelot would be the centre of a flourishing glove trade. But that is by no means the case. All but two of the references to gloves in *Le Morte Darthur* are to be found in this passage, as are the two unique references to gauntlets. Gloves and hands are mentioned frequently. When Meliagaunt asks the Queen for mercy, he does so with the words "I would no more ... but that ye would take all in your own *hands"* (2. 435-5, italics mine), and she explains the situation to Lancelot in precisely the same terms: "for all thing is put in my *hand"* (2. 435, italics mine). Lancelot accepts somewhat grudgingly but they withdraw reconciled and "right so the queen took Sir Lancelot by the bare *hand,* for he had put off his gauntlet" (2. 436, italics mine). It is a rare moment of intensely felt physical contact at the opening of an incident in which it will not be possible for Lancelot's hand to remain bare.

The episode as a whole, apparently chosen specifically for this place in the story, appears particularly strange. Malory seems to flaunt the possibility of alternative interpretations, laying clues and leaving them entirely unseen in order to emphasise a singleness of vision which, throughout the book, is his ideal. From the point of view of straightforward realism, the incident is preposterous. Miss Marple would have made mincemeat of them all. But if the clues remain unseen, that is because in an ideal world, there would be nothing to see. And after all, there is no evidence to corroborate the infidelity of the Queen because, quite simply and unambiguously, the Queen is innocent of the charges. As Malory took the time to remind us just before the kidnapping, in an evocation of the month of May: the Queen was a true lover and therefore had a good end. It was a reminder designed to prepare us for the events to come, which take place, of course, while the Queen is out Maying.

But it is with this devotion to the unsoiled virtue of the Queen, which looks too much like a determination to whitewash a tarnished reputation, that so many modem readers give up on Malory. If this is an example of the depth of his thought, and his ability to handle complex and contradictory human emotions and loyalties, we are singularly unimpressed. This is simply having your cake and eating it; there's nothing more to it than that. Admittedly, his adventures (in small doses) are agreeable and exciting; he creates a world of chivalry and mystery that has delighted generations, even centuries of readers. But it would be wiser not to try for an intellectual defence of Malory's book when surface meanings remain the ideal. And yet I wonder if we should not turn the question around and say that Malory's *Morte Darthur* is a salutary reminder that a literary reputation can survive, and indeed flourish, without the richness that complexity can bring. In other words, ambiguity in literature is no doubt a good thing, but you can have too much of a good thing - as doctors, dieticians (and other killjoys) frequently remind us. Perhaps literary specialists, and admirers of Malory, in particular, should try saying the same thing.

When a single-minded clarity of vision is preferred over the ability to see alternative interpretations, this amounts to a rejection of perceptiveness in favour of commitment, a preference for goodness rather than cleverness, and inevitably it draws attention to a book's lack of complex thought. No doubt *Le Morte Darthur* would have been more intellectually satisfying if Malory had analysed rather than imposed, if he had not done our thinking for us, as though we were likely to misunderstand. On the other hand, it is the unambiguous commitment to goodness that is the basis of the book's massive appeal to our most basic and powerful sentiments. *Le Morte Darthur* is a joyous, noble,

uplifting book which does not ask us to think or reason, but, in a way, to commit ourselves, to join in with its values and enthusiasms, almost to believe and have faith. We are not required to examine evidence and sift ambiguities, we are called upon to accept and endorse. I would have been tempted to say that the response required is quasi-religious if Malory had not shown such a luke-warm attitude to religion: Nathaniel Baxter in the Dedicatory Epistle to his translation of Calvin's sermons (1577) condemned his book as "vile & blasphemous" with its "vile and stinking story of the Sangreall" (qtd. in Parins 1988: 59), but who on earth would have thought of making that accusation other than the strident puritan who made it.

I am not saying that Malory's knights are ungodly but they are not enthusiasts. Nor are they philosophers or men of theory. They do not say much although they speak to the purpose when they have to. But eloquence, like ambiguity, is not seen as a virtue, and they are not overly given to thought. Or rather, they do not think deeply but they think justly on all important matters and prefer to put into action a code of conduct which they honour to the full. They may not be clever but they are good.

This contrast between goodness and cleverness is something two American writers have drawn much attention to and in so doing have offered an interesting approach to Malory's book. I am speaking of John Steinbeck, who singles out the two words I am using, and, before him, Mark Twain, who used Malory's "novel" - "the first and one of the greatest novels in the English language" according to Steinbeck (1982: 304) - for one of his own.

Inevitably, Malory's refusal of ambiguity and his devotion to face values made him an easy prey to the wit of Mark Twain, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is a witty book, even if many of the jokes have worn thin. Twain's Yankee wakes up in this world of surface meaning and soon catches the same disease. When told that a young man is a page he replies "Go Tong ... you aint more than a paragraph" (Twain 1982: 15), and the accumulation of jokes with old words and obsolete meanings soon becomes tiresome. But the basic situation of the clash of cultures is more productive and this enterprising, worldly-wise Yankee who finds himself in a world of surface meaning discovers an Arthurian kingdom peopled with simpletons, "big boobies" (Twain 1982: 20) entirely unaware of what an ambiguity might be, "animals" who "didn't reason," who "never put this and that together," indeed, "all their talk showed that they didn't know a discrepancy when they saw it" (Twain 1982: 29). They are even ready to believe the literal truth of the extravagant adventures they relate - at inordinate length - to each other. The

Yankee, with his "eye of mere observation," of course, recognises them at once as "lies." It goes without saying that, in a flash, he spots the adultery that lurks in Guenevere's heart, even though she, poor soul, is too innocent to realise. "It was touching," he points out "to see the queen blush and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot in Arkansas" (Twain 1982: 21). That she might, indeed, be innocent never occurs to his corrupt mind, and with his superior knowledge he soon realises the extent to which he can profit in this world of big children; "a superior man like me ought to be shrewd enough to contrive some way to take advantage" (Twain 1982: 28), he declares complacently. The people need a "new deal," he says, coining the phrase Roosevelt was to borrow in 1932 (Twain 1982: 68), but it is "advantage" that always comes first. Inevitably, he dismisses the Quest of the Holy Grail for its lack of commercial interest; "there was worlds [sic] of reputation in it, but no money" (Twain 1982:49). He delights in the ease with which he can assume power, as he casts his mercantile gaze - the word "market" regularly crops up - over the kingdom. He is a man who knows what things cost but not what they are worth, his assessment of himself does nothing to win our admiration: he sees himself as "a giant among pigmies, a man among children, a master intelligence among intellectual moles" (Twain 1982: 43). All we can say in his defence is that in his patronising remarks about the simpletons who inhabit Arthur's world he betrays, *malgré lui*, an admiration that is - one must admit - to his credit: "they were a childlike and innocent lot; telling lies of the stateliest pattern with a most gentle and winning naivety, and ready and willing to listen to anybody else's lie, and believe it too" (Twain 1982: 19). They may be brainless - and the Yankee is very much aware of his own brains and makes a point of recruiting "the brightest young minds" he could find (Twain 1982: 50) - "Yet there was something very engaging about these great simple-hearted creatures, something attractive and loveable," and in spite of all his belittling criticisms "there was a fine manliness observable in almost every face; and in some a certain loftiness and sweetness that rebuked your belittling criticisms and stilled them" (Twain 1982: 20).

Twain mocks Malory's world with much relish but in many ways his parody is a patent tribute to the great book. He pokes fun at the literalness of this unambiguous world and we see the risk Malory was taking in rejecting discernment in favour of virtue. His characters are clearly focused on ideals and risk appearing merely blinkered and unseeing. When the ideal knight is the strong silent type, as all of Malory's knights are - "he sayeth little and he doth much more" (1.124) - when they are prodigal in deeds but sparing with words,

they may give the impression that they have nothing to say for themselves and are empty-headed. Twain gives expression to criticisms that can genuinely be be made, but at the same time he never fails to emphasise the great appeal of that simple goodness, which was as unfashionable a virtue for a nineteenth century Yankee as it is these days.

When an author makes his heroes good, he must be ready to stifle a yawn. The Connecticut Yankee, for all his cleverness, is certainly not what you might call good, and it is a consummate irony, of course, that Twain chose for his hero such an appropriate name. In the title of the book he is the Yankee, and in the narrative itself he quickly establishes himself as "the boss." Twain only rarely uses his actual name as such, but he does have one. His Christian name, Hank, is splendidly American, of course - I have never met an Englishman called Hank - and his surname, Welsh in origin, fits quite well with his New England origins. But it also fits even better - and tellingly so - into *Le Morte Darthur*. His name, you recall, is Morgan, the name of Malory's arch villain, who was very, very clever, but far from good.

Clever, good ... these simple words, as I said, have been borrowed from Steinbeck and it is with a few remarks that Steinbeck made in private letters that I wish to conclude. Steinbeck's own Arthurian adventure remained unfinished and I, for one, can never quite work out what he was trying to achieve or whether he had even made up his mind about what he was trying to achieve. Did he merely want to modernise Malory's language or was he planning to rework Malory's book as Malory himself had reworked his sources? The text that he left behind is difficult to classify but during the years he was working on the project he wrote letters which are very revealing of the enormous admiration he had for *Le Morte Darthur*, which, he described as "the story of [Malory's] dreams of goodness" (Steinbeck 1982: 305).

The remarks I want to quote - and they seem to have been written with quotation in mind - throw a helpful light on Malory's book and the knights who people its pages. "It is the nature of the hero to be a fool," says Steinbeck, certainly not mincing his words, and with an American twang he adds, "Only the bad guys can be smart" (Steinbeck 1982: 350). "Cleverness," he believed, "equates with evil almost invariably," and, using an expression reminiscent of Twain's vision of the Arthurian kingdom, he describes the *Morte Darthur* as "the yearning for the childlike simplicity of a time when the great were not clever" (Steinbeck 1982: 351).

This, it seems to me, hits the Malorian nail on the head. The world he creates (or recreates, since the narrative material was not his own) seems simplistic and

is an easy target for the Twains (and the Monty Pythons) of this world. It certainly does not offer a complex analysis of the Arthurian kingdom in its determination to focus on clearly defined virtues and in its refusal either to take stock of contradictions and ambiguities or argue them out. If the evidence contradicts deeply held beliefs, it is the evidence that must be explained away not the deeply held beliefs that must be questioned, in the way that Edmund Gosse's father, a leading marine biologist but also a devout Plymouth brother, pointed out that God put the fossils into creation ready-made, because he really had created the world in 4004 BC, whatever those fossils might - with their evil ambiguity - suggest.

We are too sophisticated for this sort of thing today, no doubt, and therefore we should not take too much of a desire for sophisticated reasoning to Malory's book. Instead, we should respond to that hankering after virtue not cleverness among the great of the world, for that is what Malory's book is all about: the importance of goodness in high places. We live in a world where statesmen are expected to be clever and we have given up on goodness. We have learnt to live without it. Virtue seems to count for little - or should I say nothing - among our rulers these days, and where corruption is not rife, self-interest certainly is. Self-interest or an expert use of expense accounts, not to mention all those fabulous fees for after dinner speeches. It's all legal of course, oh yes, it's all legal, but it is cleverly, very cleverly, calculated too. Certainly sexual virtue in high places has become an irrelevance, but that, perhaps, is a good thing. Gone are the days - but only in living memory - when a divorced person could not be received at the English court although I am told that a President of the French Republic recently had to marry in haste in order to avoid having to sleep alone at Windsor castle.

When we turn to the unambiguous world of *Le Morte Darthur*, to those days when goodness and political power went hand in hand (or do I mean hand in glove?), we look back with nostalgia and regret for what today cannot be. But what am I saying? The regret as we look back is not regret in comparison with what is not true *now*, but with what was not true even *then.* For Malory's book is a tragedy and a profoundly pessimistic book. *Le Morte Darthur* is not about the importance of goodness in high places. Oh no. In his search for meaning, Malory learnt only too well the unambiguous truth. *Le Morte Darthur* is about the *impossibility* of goodness in high places. And there are no two opinions about that.

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PART I

Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century British Literature

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The Freedom of Art, The Art of Freedom: Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie* and George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*

There are few stylistic categories which have received more critical interest than *mimesis* or *imitation.* My aim in this paper will be to analyze this category from the viewpoint of two prominent pieces of Elizabethan literary criticism from the second half of the sixteenth century. Ascribed to George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie,* dated 1589,[1] and Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie,* published in 1595[2] , are more than treatises on aesthetic qualities of poetry. I will deal here with the notion of freedom of imitating and restrictions connected with the application of imitative patterns, in the *milieu* of the Elizabethan court. The focal point of my investigation will refer to the correlation between aesthetic and didactic aspects of poetry, understood in the context of moral refinement.

In his illuminating essay, Heinrich Plett (1983: 599) claims that the basic features of courtly culture of Renaissance England are "tropical, fictional, artificial - and thus aesthetic." Elizabethan court structure is compared to an atom with a very prominent nucleus - the Queen herself - surrounded by many spinning electrons (elements of courtly culture), whose shape was fashioned on the basis of imitated outer systems, e.g. antiquity and Italian patterns. The author reveals that the means of aesthetics, such as irony, allegory and impersonation, were the constituents of courtly culture. These categories influenced the behaviour of the courtiers, who had to perfect their life and stylize it as a work of art. Therefore, the author's viewpoint is that the aforementioned stylistic categories could be treated as socioaesthetic ones (Plett 1983: 612).

[1] During my investigation. I first addressed the original printed text (dated 1589) available from the Early English Books Online database (EEBO). For the purpose of this paper, I am using the modem edition of Puttenham's work by G. D. Wilcock and Alice Walker, published in 1936, which reprints the original text of *The Arte* from 1589.

[2] The *Apologie* was probably written about 1580 and was published 15 years later under two titles: *An Apologiefor Poetrie* and *The Defence of Poesie.* Since I am using C. E. Vaughan's edition of Sidney's text, I will use the title and spelling applied in Vaughan's *English Literary Criticism.*

Following this interpretative line it is not unreasonable to claim that during the Renaissance period there were other aesthetic categories which can be understood in a broader, social context. In my opinion, *imitation* is one of them. Although their works differ in content and style, both Sidney and Puttenham touch upon the philosophy of writing and stress not only aesthetic, but also utilitarian aspects of poetry. In order to better understand this difference, I will focus on the way both authors treat the notion of the poet, of poetic invention, and of freedom in choosing content and form.

Although both works can be treated as texts written in favour of poetry, there are huge differences in their style. The difference is understandable, since we are dealing with two texts written for dissimilar purposes. Sidney, a courtier and a poet, is in fact writing a reply to Stephen Gosson's *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579). Therefore, although his work is treated as a piece of poetical criticism, it was originally designed as a skilful, erudite and rhetorical response to Gosson's claims. Thus, its oratory and classical structure was meant to confirm the superiority[3] of the author, whereas Puttenham's *The Arte* was designed as a manual, and, as we gather by the end of Book III, probably also a book of conduct in the style of Baldasare Castiglione's *II Cortegiano.* Although Sidney also found inspiration in this work, it is mainly in Puttenham's text that we come across a set of instructions how to fashion a model poet and courtier through poetic means. Therefore, Sidney's *Apologie* should be compared to an observer's outlook, while Puttenham's manual could be treated almost as a prescriptive self-help book to follow.

In spite of this functional difference, both authors give similar arguments in praise of poetry, i.e. that all great thinkers, philosophers and historians were poets or good orators, and therefore these people who are trained in poetical art are more privileged or apt than those who are not poets. Moreover, they give the same etymology of the word *poet* which comes from Greek and means a "maker," and they draw a similar definition of poetry. According to Sidney (1896: 9),

> Poesie [...] is an Art of Imitation: for so Aristotle termeth it in the word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth to speake Metaphorically. A speaking Picture, with this end to teach and delight.

[3] Sidney was the dedicatee of *The Schoole of Abuse* and hence we might treat him as a figure superior (not only in status) to Gosson. Sidney's position was privileged, since he could either support or discard Gosson's claims. We might imagine Gosson's surprise when he read Sidney's *Apologie,* as he did not expect an unfavourable reply to his text. *An Apologie* must also have crushed Gosson's hopes for Sidney's patronage.

As we can see, Sidney follows an Aristotelian definition of poetry and he also emphasizes the fact that the poet awakens the desire in people to be taught virtuous behaviours. In other words, the poet prepares the readers for being educated. According to Sidney (1896: 8), the world of Nature is a brazen one, "the poets only deliver a golden"

Puttenham (1936: 3) calls a poet a maker, but he also stresses the fact that a poet is a good imitator in the sense that he depicts things which are:

> Poet may in some sort be said a follower or imitator, because he can expresse the true and liuely of euery thing is set before him, and which he taketh in hand to describe: and so in that respect is both a maker and a counterfaitor: and Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation.

In these two initial statements we can see a similar idea of a poet and poetry, with different stress put on the notion of imitation. Puttenham talks about the creation of things and imitation of existing objects. Sidney adds a didactic value of poetry and creation of a *better* reality, a golden world, Nature improved.

This allegedly subtle difference in viewpoints on imitation is elaborated further in both works. Sidney's text seems to be more miscellaneous, since he connects the classical understanding of this matter as it was presented by Plato and Aristotle. Plato makes a distinction between good and bad imitation. The imitation of existing objects is a mere coping of the imperfect copies of the forms. But at the same time there is a type of good imitation which, through divine forces, reaches God and heavenly harmony. Sidney combines this view with the Aristotelian creative imitation which springs from the poet's imagination and gives him certain freedom of choice in the application of content and form. Therefore, we can say that Sidney distinguishes three kinds of imitation:

1. Imitation of God and heavenly harmony (e.g. found in King Salomon and King David)
2. Imitation of the real things (e.g. historical writings)
3. Imitation of things which may be (where creativity and imagination of "right poets" is employed)

The "right poets," according to Sidney, are those who follow their own invention, i.e. they represent the third type of imitation. As Ronald Levao observes (1979: 225), "the object of poetic imitation is one that is consciously framed to fit the poet's intellectual needs." In Sidney's opinion, poetry does not deal with truth. This is why poets must invent, and in the world of invention, there can be nothing false, especially if it serves good purposes. Therefore,

a good poet depicts things not by what they are, but by what they should be (Sidney 1896: 36):

> Poets persons and dooings, are but pictures, what should be, and not stories what have bin, they will never give the lie to things not Affirmatively, but Allegorically and figuratively written; and therefore as in historie looking for truth, they may go away full fraught with falshood: So in Poesie, looking but for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative groundplat of a profitable invention.

Sidney's view is summarised in Heinrich Plett's book *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture.* Plett (2005: 121) notices that "a fictional, imagined reality is created through an artificial process *(ars)*, the skilful employment of mental images, which is capable of influencing reality itself."

Puttenham's view, on the other hand, seems to be much more "classical." Levao (1979: 227) argues that *The Arte* "relies heavily on the Platonic theme of controlling our representations by carefully fitting the mind to objective truth." Puttenham insists that the orderly imagination must represent things "according to their very truth." His vision of poetry is much more restricted and he tries to convince the poets to have more control over their imagination. According to Puttenham, an unbounded vision of the author can provoke monstrous ideas in the reader's mind, and therefore, lead him to evil. In other words, opaque images may be misunderstood and later misapplied in real life. Perhaps an echo of this attitude can be found in Book II of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* Guyon, a virtous knight exposed to many temptations, needs a guide, Palmer, to control his actions so that his "foot does not slide" from the right path. And perhaps, following this Puritan cautiousness, this is also the reason why other allegories were interpreted - not to allow any wrong conclusions or bad examples.

In this moralising mode which distinguishes good and bad imitation, let us look at one of the most stunning passages in Sidney's *Apologie* referring to the way in which the imitation of the classics should be performed:

> Truly I could wish, if at I might be so bold to wish, in a thing beyond the reach of my capacity, the diligent Imitators of Tully & Demosthenes, most worthie to be imitated, did not so much keepe Nizolian paper bookes, of their figures and phrase, as by attentive translation, as it were, devoure them whole, and make them wholly theirs. For now they cast Sugar and spice uppon everie dish that is served to the table: like those Indians, not content to weare eare-rings at the fit and naturall place of the eares, but they will thrust Jewels through their nose and lippes, because they will be sure to be fine. (Sidney 1896: 53)

In this passage, Sidney addresses the imitators of the classics and asks them to use the ancient texts appropriately, i.e. not to misuse the copies so that they are inappropriate for the messages conveyed. Through this claim, Sidney underlines the fact that imitation, although it can be liberal, must be done prudently and creatively. This point can be treated as a response to an ongoing dispute included also in Roger Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* (1570) dealing with how the imitation of the classics should be performed. According to Ascham (1967: 56), when referring to classics, the scholar (or poet) should not only copy their eloquence, but should leant "all true understanding and right judg[e]ment."

Just as much as *how* to imitate, it is important *what* to imitate. J. W. H. Atkins (1947: 113,116) mentions the fact that Sidney's *Apologie* is a very eclectic piece of literary criticism. Among its sources there are Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Cicero and patristic writings. Sidney's work itself is a good example of how Renaissance poets worked. The unlimited use of sources (classical works especially) shows that the poet was free to choose the best excerpts and ideas in order to convey his message. From the very beginning of his *Apologie*, Sidney (1896: 6-7) stresses the fact that the liberty of conceit is the divine force of poetry. Therefore, creative imitation does not only mean creating new forms and ideas using unbound imagination, but also using the existing sources in a sensible way.

The question of *what* and *how* should be included in poetry is another issue where Puttenham and Sidney differ. When considering the content and form, Sidney insists on the fictional nature of poetry and argues that its crucial feature is the poet's "feigning," "not rhyming and versing" (cf. Levao 1979: 228). Puttenham stresses the need to choose the right form to the contents that are to be conveyed. Whereas in Sidney's theory, *not* practice, poetry eludes the boundaries of form, Puttenham places great emphasis on the correspondence between matter and style. According to Sidney, versifying is not the key issue in the case of poems. It is the *invention*, the idea which makes poetry. Sidney recalls the example of a philosopher who, if he wants to teach, needs to give examples. Therefore, when the poet wants to teach the unknown, he needs to describe it in words. Poets have the right to create in whatever style and form they want because good things can come out only of good components: "for if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful" (Sidney 1896: 26).

From these examples it follows that although Sidney's text might be considered "an apologie for libertie" in the choice of content and form, it also includes some contradictions. For example, Sidney (1896: 47-48) attacks playwrights for being too "liberal" in not following the Aristotelian unities. He demands a correspondence to be maintained between imitation and the actions imitated.

Therefore, what was acceptable in the case of poetry is not accepted in the case of drama. We will not encounter such a lack of consistency in Puttenham's text. When Puttenham (1936: 66) writes of poetical proportion, metrical patterns and *decorum*, he uses the classical examples and gives precise directions as to how these forms should be applied:

> For to an historicall poeme no certain number is limited, but as the matter fals out: also a *distick* or couple of verses is not to be accompted a staffe, but serues for a continuance as we see in Elegie, Epitaph, Epigramme or such meetres, of plaine concord not harmonically entertangled, as some other songs of more delicate musick be.

or:

> Poet must know to whose eare he maketh his rime, and accommodate himselfe thereto, and not giue such musicke to the rude and barbarous, as he would to the learned and delicate eare. (Puttenham 1936: 87)

Puttenham uses the classical writers' rhyming and metrical patterns in order to describe possible versification manners in English, and determines which of them would be actually appropriate. He also gives standards concerning classical distinction between barbarous and sophisticated audience. In other words, we talk of two types of imitation - the one of content, and the one of form. One influences another, but Sidney stresses the freedom of choice as far as the poetical form is concerned. Puttenham sees the form as conditioned by the content, being very scrupulous in his advice.

Despite the aforementioned differences between Sidney and Puttenham, there is one more shared quality which can be found in these two texts. We once again return to the utilitarian aspect of poetry as presented in both works, which is in tune with the Humanist - and especially Protestant Humanist - thought, and with what Plato stated in his *Republic* - poets must offer vital contribution to the state. Cicero's "teach, delight, and move" is transferred from the orator to the poet (cf. Levao 1979: 225). The poets' right is to create distilled moral concepts: "If the poet do his part aright, he will show you in Tantalus, Atreus, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned; in Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses, each thing to be followed" (Sidney 1896:19). Sidney (1896: 8) points out the didactic function of poetry many times. In the celebrated passage about Cyrus, he says that a skilful re-fashioning of the subject should teach people good behaviour:

> Which delivering foorth, also is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build Castles in the aire: but so farre substantially it worketh, not onely

> to make a Cyrus, which had bene but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyrusses, if they will leame aright, why and how that maker made him.

This passage highlights the aforementioned issue connected with this text, i.e. the fecundity of nature. Nature which is derived from the Latin *natus* (bom) becomes a prolific force which can breed new forms. And these forms can be enhanced, or conceived, in the poet's mind sparked with divine inspiration.

It is not the only power of the poet. His mental abilities allow him to deliver cruel things in an enjoyable form:

> That imitation whereof Poetrie is, hath the most conveniencie to nature of al other: insomuch that as Aristotle saith, those things which in themselves are horrible, as cruel battailes, unnatural monsters, are made in poeticall imitation, delightfull.
>
> (Sidney 1896: 24)

Sidney uses once again Aristotle's argument stating that there is no direct correspondence between content and form. "Poetical imitation" is a smoothing construction laid over sometimes rough matter. In this way, reading good poetry should move one to desirable virtues. We need to see evil in order to appreciate the beauty of virtue and later to scorn improper behaviours.

As far as this utilitarian need to lead readers to virtue is concerned, the two authors agree. And they are not alone in their views. It is hard to talk about Renaissance poetry in terms of purely aesthetic values, although Elizabethan preoccupation with art was tremendous. However, it must be stressed once again that artistic form was an important dress of didactic guidelines. For instance, Puttenham recalls Edward III and the Order of the Garter to illustrate how courtly behaviour might be expressed in verse and, at the same time, how it can become an example to imitate. Below there is an excerpt from *The Arte* (Puttenham 1936: 103-104) which needs to be quoted at length:

> King *Edwarde* the thirde, her Maiesties most noble progenitour, first founder of the famous order of the Garter, gaue this posie with it. *Hony soit qui mal y pense*, commonly thus Englished, Ill be to him that thinketh ill, but in mine opinion better thus, Dishonored be he, who meanes vnhonorably. There can not be a more excellent deuise, nor that could containe larger intendment, nor greater subtiltie, nor (as a man may say) more vertue or Princely generositie. For first he did by it mildly & grauely reproue the peruers construction of such noble men in his court, as imputed the kings wearing about his neck the garter of the lady with whom he danced, to some amorous alliance betwext them, which was not true. He also iustly defended his owne integritie, saued the noble womans good renowme, which by licentious

> speeches might haue bene empaired, and liberally recompenced her iniurie with an honor, such as none could haue bin deuised greater nor more glorious or permanent vpon her and all the posteritie of her house. It inureth also as a worthy lesson and discipline for all Princely personages, whose actions, imaginations, countenances and speeches, should euermore corrrespond in all trueth and honorable simplicitie.

For Puttenham, a French motto is a perfect reflection of the lesson King Edward gave to his courtiers. The author describes the memorable event in which Elizabeth's renowned ancestor played the role of a moral leader who could pass the quintessence of his views in one line of a maxim. *"Horry soit qui maly pensé"* has become a spiritual dictum, a lexical representation of desired behaviour. In order to stress the need for giving poetical form to didactic lessons, Puttenham improves the standard English translation of this sentence, giving his own, more melodious one. David Javitch (1972: 881-82) compares the correlation between artistic examples as the one above and the types of behaviour at court in the case of Castiglione's *II Cortegiano* and in Book III of Puttenham's *The Arte.* His conclusion is that patterns for writing poetry must be in tune with the patterns of courtly behaviour. Following systematic models in poetry, i.e. imitation of e.g. ancient prosody, is an example of submissive behaviour which can be helpful in being an acquiescent courtier. It serves as a training, as part of *sprezzatura.* The court is an incubator for poetic minds, but through poetry the poets can become better courtiers.

Such association can be found, e.g. in Sir John Davis's poem *Orchestra, or a Poem of Dancing* (1596), which uses the Elizabethan Court as a pattern of behaviour delivered in a harmonious, poetic form which later could be treated as another pattern to follow. Therefore, we could start thinking of Renaissance imitation as a creative, ongoing process, focused on improvement of moral standards through artistic tools. From the last example we can observe that *creative imitation* moves from the territory of art into the manner of courtly behaviours. Poetry which imitates (or invents, in the case of Sidney) should be itself a desirable object for imitation. In this paper I have been trying to argue that despite many differences, both Sidney and Puttenham agree that *poetic imitation* in Elizabethan England can be understood as a socioaesthetic category linking poetry to the behaviours of the target readers or the writers themselves.

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Pathos, Logos and *Ethos'*. Rhetorical Duel between Brutus and Antony in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

According to Brian Vickers, "Shakespeare's poetic language was nourished by rhetoric" (1970:163). It is then hardly surprising that the application of rhetoric as an analytical tool for the study of Shakespeare's works has a long tradition; L. C. Knights observes that "the works of T. W. Baldwin, Sister Miriam Joseph, B. L. Joseph and Brian Vickers - to name no others - have established beyond doubt the importance of rhetoric in Elizabethan poetics" (1980: 2). Taking into account the history of the shaping of poetic verse in England, the rhetorical perspective seems to be one of the most rewarding approaches towards the sixteenth-century literature; as pointed out by C. S. Lewis (1954: 61), "nearly all our older poetry was written and read by men to whom the distinction between poetry and rhetoric, in its modem form, would have been meaningless." The art of oratory was the axis of the Renaissance theory of composition and had a profound influence on the way Shakespeare and his contemporaries perceived and employed language. b j j A-[1]**'

The paper is an attempt at describing the functioning of three rhetorical persuasive proofs: *logos, pathos* and *ethos* in two speeches of Antony and Brutus from William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The two *orationes* from the Forum scene (III. ii) are widely ranked among "purple passages," the best known passages from the playwright's oeuvre and offer the most fruitful material for rhetorical and stylistic investigation.

The division into three persuasive appeals, *pathos*, *ethos* and *logos*, is one of the basic elements of the traditional theory of rhetoric.[1] The technique of *pathos* consists in inducing certain emotions in the audience to secure their favourable reaction to the orator's words. "The audience begins to *feel* that the speaker must be right, and is won over to his side" (Dixon 1990: 25). Through *pathos* a skilled speaker should be able to put the listeners into a receptive frame of mind and then manipulate their emotions, "arousing delight or sorrow, love or

[1] Cf. Kennedy 1963, Dixon 1990.

hatred, indignation or mirth" (Dixon 1990: 25). Through the technique of *ethos* the speaker shows himself good and noble and thus worthy of trust. Aristotle *(Rhetoric*, I. ii. 4[2]) sees this appeal as the most potent, since by displaying himself a credible man the speaker may exercise all other persuasive appeals much more effectively: "we place confidence in the good to a wider extent and with less hesitation, on all subjects generally; but on points where no real accuracy exists, but there is room for doubt, we lay even entire confidence in them." Gideon Burton points out in *Silva Rhetoricae* that using the technique of *ethos* was recommended in *exordium*, the initial part of the speech, when the speaker's credibility with the audience is established and when the framework for the speech is constructed. Finally, the third persuasive proof, *logos*, is based on reason. By employing this technique the speaker draws on logic, constructing his utterance on the framework of the syllogism or *enthymeme*, a syllogism without one premise.

According to Wolfgang Muller (1979: 118), "No school rhetoric may explain the nature, aim and dangers of rhetoric better than Brutus's and Antony's speeches in the Forum."[3] The Forum Scene is the turning point of the action of the play and a moment of unique dramatic tension: during the funeral of Caesar two political opponents, Brutus and Antony, fight a rhetorical duel trying to win the plebeians for their political ends. Brutus, one of the assassins, makes an attempt at explaining the murder and convincing the crowd that Caesar had to be sacrificed for the benefit of Rome. Antony, on the other hand, wants to persuade the audience to recognize Brutus as a villain and it is he who wins the duel by convincing the crowd to turn against Brutus and other conspirators. Shakespeare arranges the two characters' speeches one immediately after the other. Such planning of the scene results in the intensification of dramatic tension and enhancement of its dynamic qualities. The speeches characterize Brutus and Antony and become the expressions of their political views. Consequently, the whole scene becomes not only a duel of rhetorical skills, but also a confrontation of two strong political personalities.

Parallel as Brutus's and Antony's *orationes* are, there are great many differences between the persuasive strategies employed by the two speakers. Brutus's speech is primarily based on *logos* and *ethos.* Antony, on the other hand, makes ample use of the fact that he was allowed to deliver his speech after the assassin

[2] Traditionally, the references to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Cicero's *De Inventione* do not point to selected pages, but to particular sections of treatises (book, chapter, section).

[3] "Kein Schulrhetorik kann Wesen, Ziel und Gefahren der Rhetorik besser verdeutlichen als die Reden des Brutus und Antonius auf dem Forum" (English trans. M. Ch.).

and directs his speech to subvert Brutus's *oratio,* combining all three persuasive strategies. The two *orationes* differ in the number of rhetorical figures: Brutus's oratory is much more figurative and adorned with numerous figures and tropes; "Brutus speaks to the people neatly, clearly, rhythmically and reasonably - in prose" (Hulme 1964: 134), whereas Antony relies on "a masterly blend of emotional appeal and false logic" (Sanders 1967: 34).

At the beginning of III. ii the plebeians demand explanation for Caesar's death: "We will be satisfied: let us be satisfied[4]" (III. ii. 1). The people want sufficient clarification to enable them to rest content with what happened to Caesar. With the stirred mob gathered in the Forum the speech of Brutus is a political necessity. The assassin has to ascend the pulpit and sufficiently explain his actions lest the people might turn against him and the other conspirators. In order to secure his political position Brutus has to persuade the mob that the killing of Caesar was unavoidable.

In III. i Brutus gives specific instructions as to the shape of the funeral. The ceremony will start with him delivering the first speech after which Antony will enter with Caesar's body and deliver his own speech as a friend of the late ruler. Cassius opposes the idea to allow Antony to the pulpit: "Do not consent / That Antony speak in his funeral" (III. i. 231-32). The conspirator is well aware of the oratory skills of Caesar's "friend" and knows that the speech may turn the people against them ("Know you how much the people may be moved / By that which he will utter" III. i. 233-34). Brutus ignores the advice and insists on his plan. He is determined to speak first and has no doubts that his explanations will content the mob while Antony, who will deliver his oratory "by leave and by permission" (III. i. 239), cannot alter the people after they have been won by his speech. Brutus assures Cassius that the ceremony shall "advantage more than do us wrong" (III. i. 242) if the people are given proper explanation and Caesar is to be buried with full honours. Brutus assumes that when the people see that the conspirators hold the murdered ruler in great respect and praise him even after his death they will be more easily convinced that the assassination was unavoidable for the benefit of the country and was not dictated by their animosity towards the ruler. Brutus gives Antony direct instructions as to what he should include in his speech: "You shall not in your funeral blame us, / But speak all good you can devise of Caesar" (III. ii. 245-46). Brutus wants Antony to deliver a *laudatio,* a speech of praise, a clear instance of epideictic

[4] All quotations are taken from the Arden Edition of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar,* ed. D. Daniell. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomas Learning, 2005).

oratory, which would not go beyond the matter of expressing respect for the late ruler and which would not in any way touch upon the moral assessment of the conspiracy. A great quality of Antony's oratory skills is that he is able to turn a *laudatio* into an *accusatio* (a speech in which the orator accuses somebody of a crime) and a *deliberatio* (a speech in which the speaker tries to persuade the hearers to a certain course of action). The speaker mixes the three genres of oratory, gradually turning the speech of praise into a strict moral criticism of the conspiracy, which compels the plebeians to rise against the conspirators.

Most critics agree that Brutus's decision to allow Antony to the pulpit is his greatest political mistake. Brutus strongly believes that the plebeians will understand and accept his reasons for killing Caesar and will share his idealist approach. At this point Brutus may be accused of the lack of political wisdom and of the ability to foresee the political consequences of his decision - he rejects the possibility that Antony will go against his instructions and will win the crowd to his side. By doing so he also seems to underestimate the manipulative power of rhetoric and to reject the possibility that another speaker's neatly devised oratory may easily outshine his rational explanations. The reason for Brutus's failure in the duel does not consist only in the fact that he allows Antony to speak, but primarily in the style of his oratory. As observed by Jean Fuzier (1981: 51):

> Instead of explaining the political situation which led to Caesar's murder, and justifying this act, if necessary, by a detailed account of Caesar's encroachments upon the secular liberties of the Roman Republic, he speaks in his own name, as though he alone were the instigator and author of the killing of Caesar, and he cannot bring himself to charge him with anything more precise and more condemnable than "ambition"; in fact he speaks like a guilty man who has just realized his guilt, and is unable to plead his own cause convincingly.

In this respect one can hardly accuse Brutus of lying and deceit. Muller (1979:119) argues that Brutus's *oratio* is an example *ofgenus iudiciae,* a speech in which there is no discrepancy between what the speaker believes in and what he wants others to believe he believes in. The speaker takes the liberty to speak his mind. This would suggest that Brutus is mostly honest in his argumentation and the speech he delivers reveals a number of important traits of his character.

Vickers (1979:242) points to the "skeletal purity" of Brutus's speech, which strikes the reader with its "remarkable rhetorical symmetry." The opening of Brutus's *exordium* is very effective. In order to win the plebeians' attention the speaker uses apostrophe and addresses them "Romans, countrymen and lovers"

(III. ii. 13). The three epithets constitute a figure of *tricolon,* which in Classical rhetoric was often used as verbal ornament.[5] However, the address does not solely perform aesthetic function. As the communicative effect of these words consists in attracting the plebeians' attention, they establish the speaker-hearer relationship and prepare the grounds for the words that follow. The words are a part of the strategy of *ethos:* Brutus lays primary emphasis on the epitaph "Romans," which allows him to highlight the bonds of nationality between him and his hearers and suggests that since they are all Romans, the plebeians may expect him to be honest and trust him. The strategy of achieving the audience's goodwill is particularly strengthened by the last epithet "lovers," which in this context is semantically equivalent to the word "friends" (Daniell 2005: 253). From the very beginning of his speech, Brutus constructs the image of himself as a patriot, a friend of the people and a Roman who is able to sacrifice his friend for the sake of his country. The epithets are followed with three imperative clauses in which the speaker calls the people to "hear" (III. ii. 13) his cause, to "be silent" (III. ii. 14), to "believe" him (III. ii. 14), to "have respect" (III. ii. 15) for his honour, to "censure" (III. ii. 16) his speech and to "awake" (III. ii. 16) their senses to his words. The imperatives perform a number of functions. Primarily, they are aimed at silencing the crowd and making it "well-disposed, attentive and receptive" *(De Inventione,* I. xx). By enhancing the *exordium* with such a number of imperatives Brutus also clearly takes over the control of the situation and assumes the role of a person legitimately entitled to command others. The figure of *chiasmus* allows the speaker to lay particular emphasis exactly on these words, which play a significant role in the development of his persuasive techniques. The repetition of the words "hear" and "believe" intensifies the force of the imperatives and helps him to attract full attention of the people; on the other hand, the repetition of the word "honour" aids the strategy of *ethos.* The imperative clauses used by Brutus also perform several persuasive functions: by referring to his "honour" the speaker surreptitiously assures the mob of his noble character and continues the construction of his positive image. By making himself look like a noble patriot, the speaker wins the audience's favour. His request to be judged is strengthened by the use of the figure of *paronomasia,* a repetition of words similar in sound but different in sense, in "*Censure* me in your wisdom and awake your *senses"* (III. ii. 16-17) [italics mine]. The words in which he asks the people to judge him are to prove that he is not afraid of their assessment since, as he suggests,

[5] Cf. Burton, *Silva Rhetoricae.*

he has nothing to hide and the people are bound to acknowledge the political necessity of killing Caesar.

In the *argumentatio* Brutus focuses primarily on *logos*, using patriotism as his main argument. Entering the dialogue with a hypothetical member of the audience he declares that he killed Caesar not because the ruler was not dear to him, but because he loved "Rome more." With the comparative form of the *correctio (non* X, *sed* Y) the speaker reveals to the audience the hierarchy of values he wants them to believe he holds: his mother country is for Brutus the utmost priority and no other issue or value may outweigh his love for Rome - at this point *logos* is turned into *ethos.* The speaker explains that the killing of Caesar was necessary for the benefit of Rome and for the sake of his country he is even able to sacrifice his own friend. The rhetorical power of the word "Rome" is further strengthened by the echo of the first epithet from the *exordium.* In a series of rhetorical questions Brutus tries to put himself in the position of a tragic hero who has to choose between two equal values: friendship and the love for his country. He also tries to present himself as a benefactor of the people: the speaker once again uses *logos* to construct the syllogism: when Caesar was alive *(minor premise)* he posed a threat to the plebeians' freedom *(major premise),* therefore his assassination secured the political being of the people *(conclusio).* For the audience it becomes much harder to disbelieve the man who protected them and to condemn the deed which secured their well-being.

David Daniell (2005: 55) observes that the *oratio* of Brutus is "so coldly effective that at the end the confused want him to have either a statue or a triumph or to be crowned Caesar." The people gathered in the Forum cry that it is he who should be Caesar ("Let him be Caesar" [III. ii. 51]) and seem to have been completely won by the oratory. The reaction of the people reveals the irony of the situation: Brutus killed Caesar to prevent him from being crowned and to preserve the republic, yet after the speech of the assassin the mob wants to have him crowned as Caesar, ending the republic anyway. Daniell concludes that "logical, balanced, heavily patterned, economical to a fault, coolly self-justifying in 'as he was ambitious, I slew him,' in its self-consciousness of gesture, the oration matches the individuality, the physical shape, of Brutus" (2005: 55). The speech expresses the orator. Brutus hardly ever resorts to *pathos* - he relies more on logical reasoning and presenting himself to the audience as a noble and valorous man. He does not try to instigate in the audience the emotions of pity or fear; the primary emphasis of his speech is laid on the construction of a respectful political and moral image of himself and relies on the appeal to the audience's reason. It is a speech of

a politician who wants to convince the people to his ideas through reason and by promoting his own integrity. This strategy of Brutus is used against him by Antony, who delivers a speech that cunningly undermines the assumptions of the first speaker's oratory.

The oration of Antony is markedly different from Brutus's. The discrepancies between the speeches concern both the formal aspects of the oratory as well as the content. Antony's speech is three times longer than Brutus's *oratio* ("close to 1,100 words, against Brutus's 350" [Daniell 2005: 72]) and represents a different type of organization of the speech. Fuzier observes that Antony's use of the art of rhetoric is "less systematic and more devious" (1981: 32). Brutus bases his oratory on the combination of two strategies: *logos* and *ethos*-, Antony, on the other hand, conjoins all three modes of persuasion. Müller argues that if Brutus's oratory may be described as an instance of *genus iudiciae*, Antony's rhetoric is dominated by *ductus subtilis* (1979: 127), a mode in which the speaker constructs his rhetorical strategies on seeming, deception, and irony.

The first words of Antony's *exordium* seem to mimic the opening of Brutus's oratory. The speaker addresses the plebeians with an apostrophe and asks for their attention: "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears" (III. ii. 74). Antony, like the first speaker, uses three epithets to address the audience; yet, he arranges them in a different order. Antony uses "Friends" as the first epithet which is clearly set "against Brutus's more formal 'Romans'" (Daniell 2005: 257). The first word of the second speech "allows immediate warmth, and thus access to their [the plebeians'] hearts" (Daniell 2005: 257). From the very beginning of the oration Antony suggests close bonds of friendship between himself and the people in the Forum; the bonds of common nationality emphasized by Brutus are for him of lesser importance. Daniell (2005: 257) observes that in Antony's *oratio* the "movement from the personal to the national is reinforced by expansion: *Friends* (one syllable), *Romans* (two syllables), *countrymen* (three syllables)." The echo of the first word of the speech is undeniably the strongest and immediately sets a certain perspective for the whole oratory: Antony will employ the suggested bonds of friendship in his appeals of*pathos* and *ethos*. The speaker declares that he came "to bury Caesar, not to praise him," which is an open lie: Antony does plan to praise Caesar in the next part of his speech; what is more, as was emphasized above, he is using the conventional form of *laudatio.*

After a short *sententia* (which is a means of the technique of *logos)* Antony repeats the main accusation against Caesar: "The noble Brutus / Hath told you Caesar was ambitious" (III. ii. 78-79). Antony conditions the validity of the

accusation in Brutus's nobility - by undermining one of the statements, i.e. Brutus being noble or Caesar being ambitious, one subverts the other and that is exactly what he tries to do in the rest of his speech, by gradually changing the semantics of the words "honourable" and "noble." Sister Miriam Joseph (1966: 139) comments on the speaker's strategy in the following terms: "An outstanding instance of *antiphrasis* is the repetition of'honourable man,' spoken at first with apparent sincerity [...], but growing in biting irony." Antony's words "For Brutus is an honourable man; / So are they all, all honourable men" (III. ii. 83-4) weaken moral uniqueness of Brutus, as all the conspirators share the common feature of being "honourable" and may be described in similar terms. This particular effect is achieved by the figure of *epizeuxis*, "the emphatic repetition of a word with no other word between" (Fuzier 1981: 33), which lays particular emphasis on the word "all." The information that Brutus is "honourable" is given a number of times and each repetition gradually diminishes the semantic strength of the phrase and its positive connotations. The word becomes a neutral, common label for all the conspirators and finally gains purely pejorative tone with one of the plebeians asking: "They were traitors: honourable men?" (III. ii. 154). At this point the word "honourable" becomes semantically equivalent to the word "traitor." In his use of the phrase Antony resorts to irony, a means of rhetoric defined by Burton as "speaking in such a way as to imply the contrary to what one says, often for the purpose of derision, mockery or jest" *(Silva Rhetoricae).* However, the speaker follows the idea of *ductus subtilis* and pretends not to be aware of the persuasive techniques he exercises. The force of his use of irony depends primarily on being gradual and so disguised as to make the speaker seem perfectly unconscious of manipulating the language. Antony relies to a large extent on understatements and craftily manipulates the audience to make sure they understand and swallow all his intricate insinuations.

Next, Antony proceeds to refuting Brutus's accusation. By exercising *logos* he provides a list of reasonable proofs which counter the conspirator's claim that Caesar was ambitious. The arguments advanced by the speaker are, in fact, a praise of Caesar and prove that Antony's initial declaration is false. The list of arguments in defence of Caesar is long. Firstly, Antony points out that the murdered ruler was his "friend" and always remained "faithful and just" to him (III. ii. 85). Secondly, he emphasizes that Caesar's military campaigns brought fortune to Rome and secured the development of the country. Next, Antony resorts to the appeal of *pathos:* "When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept" (III. ii. 92). The speaker wants to construct the image of a ruler who did not put himself above the common people and was compassionate, especially to the

weakest. Finally, Antony emphatically resorts to an ocular proof: "You all did see, that on the Lupercal *1*1 thrice presented him a kingly crown, / Which he did thrice refuse" (III. ii. 96-98). By referring to the would-be coronation Antony ultimately dismisses the charge that Caesar was ambitious and provocatively asks a rhetorical question: "Was this ambition?" (III. ii. 98). After presenting each proof in defence of Caesar the speaker consistently contrasts his arguments with Brutus's claim: "But Brutus says, he was ambitious, / And Brutus is a honorable man" (III. ii. 87-88). The disjunctive words "But" and "Yet" signal semantic turns. Antony persuasively contrasts his arguments with the arguments of the first speaker; the latter being grounded in the alleged "honour" of the orator, the former in common knowledge and ocular proofs. Such construction of the arguments plainly undermines Brutus's points, which turn out feeble and false. Simultaneously with the validity of the conspirator's line of thought, Antony deconstructs the positive image Brutus struggles to construct in his *oratio* through the use of *ethos.*

After refuting Brutus's arguments Antony denies doing it: "I speak not to disapprove what Brutus spoke, / But here I am to speak what I know" (III. ii. 101-2). One of the first actions Antony performs in his speech is contradicting Brutus's words (in declaring that he does not intend to praise Caesar); afterwards the speaker consistently refutes the arguments of his political opponent. The declaration is an instance of *ethos',* it is aimed at making a positive impression and constructing his own image as a just and honest person. Antony clearly does not want to be considered an orator who exercises manipulative techniques on the people, but a speaker who speaks only what he holds true. This "self depreciation is meant to pass for *tapinosis* (belittling or debasing device)" and may be understood as a "subtle private joke which Antony enjoys while the citizens are contented to take his words at their face-value, and are ironically spurred to mutiny not by plain Antony, but by Antony's image of Brutus, the arch-rhetorician" (Fuzier 1981: 41). The strategy ofbelittling one's own skills, *depreciatio,* which is selected by the speaker, turns out to be a communicative necessity. Antony confronts the audience that has already been won by the previous speaker and he has to be very careful in his planning of the oration. Avoiding open confrontation with Brutus is the best way to confront the unfavourable audience. This strategy not only helps Antony in creating his positive image, but simultaneously undermines the position of the previous speaker, who, in the light of Antony's suggestions, becomes a manipulator and a liar.

The orator uses *depreciatio',* he denies his own skills trying to prove the claim that he is "no orator" (III. ii. 210): "For I have neither wit, nor words,

nor worth, / Action, nor utterance, not the power of speech / To stir men's blood" (III. ii. 214-16). *Depreciatio* does not undermine Antony's position; the speaker argues that he can "only speak right on" (III. ii. 216), without resorting to figurative language - once again Antony emphasizes how honest and truthful he is in his oratory. The speaker's words are self-contradictory: he claims that he does not possess any rhetorical knowledge and does not know how to exercise the manipulative techniques, yet, as pointed out by Daniell (2005: 265): "wit (intellectual cleverness), as well as starting a run of alliterations, begins a list of the whole technique of good oratory, followed by words (fluency), worth (authority), action (gesture) and utterance (eloquence), all leading to stirring power." The *enumeratio*, which is to prove Antony's rhetorical incompetence, in fact proves his knowledge of the subject and deep understanding of what is crucial in the construction of a successful oratory. The fact that Antony's *depreciatio* is self-contradictory cannot be observed by the audience, who are unaware of the intricate manipulation which is exercised upon them. The plebeians slavishly follow the speakers, without judging the coherence of the arguments, at the same time, various tricks played by the orators make them even more susceptible to persuasion.

In his declaration: "I only speak right on: /1 tell you that which you yourselves do know, / Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths" (III. ii. 216-18), Antony uses a number of rhetorical figures. To emphasize the role of the audience and flatter them the speaker uses *polyptotoir*. in "I tell *you* that which *you yourself* do know" [italics mine]; the repetition of the word "poor" is the device of *epizeuxis*, which is "specifically set aside for appeals to extreme passion" (Daniell 2005: 265). The phrase "dumb mouths," which in itself is oxymoronic, refers to the "Elizabethan notion that a victim's wounds bled afresh in the presence of the murderer" (Daniell 2005: 265). The wounds on Caesar's body "speak for" (III. ii. 119) the orator. The assassin is immediately identified by the speaker in his very next line: "were I Brutus" (III. ii. 119). This line functions as another indirect accusation against the first speaker.

Antony also speculates about what the oratories would look like if he and Brutus changed places. Using *pathos* he argues that then his speech "would ruffle up" the plebeians' "spirits and put a tongue / In every wound of Caesar that should move / The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny" (III. ii. 221-23). Daniell (2005: 265) calls this "an exhilarating rhetorical trick." The juxtaposition of the opposites: Antony and Brutus, two political opponents, who represent markedly different styles of oratory, is constructed around the figure of *syneciosis*, "a composition of contraries" (Joseph 1966: 135). Antony further

distances himself from the conspirators, whose positive image is deconstructed and reversed. The hypothetical change of places is not necessary, since it is Antony who is able to instigate powerful emotions in the audience and it is his command of oratory that turns out to be superior. Joseph (1966: 286) observes that "this oration is simultaneously excellent rhetoric and excellent poetic, for it unquestionably persuades, and it is so woven into the plot as to constitute a twofold dramatic peripeteia: Antony's fortunes begin to rise, Brutus's to fall."

This article does not fully describe the complexity of the two speeches, which offer enough material for a series of papers. By a close rhetorical analysis of the scene the reader is given the opportunity to compare and contrast two markedly different persuasive strategies and to draw conclusions as to the effectiveness of two contrary styles of oratory. The Forum scene in *Julius Caesar* is one of the greatest tributes to the art of oratory made in sixteenth-century English literature. As observed by Gayle Greene (1980: 69), "rhetoric in this play is a theme as well as style."

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The Anatomy of Ambiguity: Interpreting John Lyly's *Euphues*

The Introduction to the latest, modem-spelling edition of John Lyly's *Euphues* books contains many of the keywords employed by modem criticism to discuss this work of Renaissance prose fiction: "ambivalence," "antithetical patterning," "doubleness," "duality," "equivocality," or "the paradoxical conjunction of opposites" (Scragg 2003: 6). In general, however, the term used most often is "ambiguity," and it is the lack of its precise definition that seems to be the major problem in establishing a common basis for critical discussions of *Euphues.* Ambiguity perceived vaguely as the duplicity of the text, of the reader or of the author himself resulted in a wealth of interpretations, and the apparent ambivalence of *Euphues* allowed modem scholars to develop disparate analyses narrowed down to selected aspects in the fields of linguistics, literary history or sociology. As Janel M. Mueller (1984: 385) points out, this contributed to a rather fragmentary nature of the studies on *The Anatomy of Wit:*

> in such ongoing ferment, the lack of any settled critical opinion regarding Euphuism as a style or *Euphues* as a work is obvious. [...] an appreciable amount of the diverse critical response to *Euphues* ought to be accommodated in any interpretation that seeks [...] to cope with its genuine complexity.

Not to increase this ferment on the one hand, and in order to accommodate different points of view on the other, I will try to make the frequently mentioned ambiguity a viable basis for coherent examination by assigning it an exact meaning. I will refer to the development in literary ambiguity as described by Timothy Bahti, who diagnosed a shift in the assumptions and practices of literary theory from *ambiguity* to the more recent *indeterminacy.* In brief, New Critics such as William Empson or Cleanth Brooks attempted to normalise ambiguity as a positive textual quality of the union of opposites. Consequently, ambiguity seems to have lost its inherent unruliness, while the new category of indeterminacy has emerged:

> the two terms are oriented toward different sites of literary meaning, and bring with them different evaluations: ambiguity is found in literature, and represents a "value," a "richness," while indeterminacy surfaces in interpretation, where it introduces "impossibility or unjustifiability" of choice and decision, rather than the discovery of some value. Ambiguity is positive, indeterminacy privative.
>
> (Bahti 1986: 210)

As Bahti explains, the preinterpretive ambiguity is a latent quality whose function is not perplexity, but complexity; it is not destructive, but constructive. The fact that texts are ambiguous, i.e. encouraging mutually exclusive readings, does not yet support the claim that they are unreliable. The case of *Euphues* is particularly relevant here. It is a product of an epoch thought to be primarily logocentric, and of a culture preoccupied with Augustine's tenets, especially his concept of the world as God's poem enhanced by antithesis:

> just as the beauty of language is achieved by a contrast of opposites [...] the beauty of the course of this world is built up by a kind of rhetoric, not of words but of things, which employs the contrast of opposites [...] the beauty of all things is derived, as it were, from antitheses, or contrasts.
>
> (Augustine's *De ordine*, qtd. in Heninger 1994: 127)'

Ambiguity has been the key term in discussing John Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) since Albert Feuillerat's study of 1910, where he claimed that antithesis, i.e. the rhetorical device of setting a counter-proposition to the

[1] S. K. Heninger, Jr. (1994: 49) presents Augustinian reading as opposed to deconstructive one and argues that it is the former which should be adopted in cultural studies which take into consideration the spirit of Elizabethan epoch. To quote here the strongest argument supporting this claim, the anti-theological deconstructive reading does not only go against humanistic premises, but "would have been heretical in Elizabethan England - as well as treasonous." Hence, Renaissance texts require an approach that would take into account the plausible interpretation and understanding of contemporary readers and stay true to the English sensibilities of the latter half of the sixteenth century. The juxtaposition of the Augustian and deconstructive thinking is also offered by, e.g. Brenda Deen Schildgen in her article entitled provocatively "Augustine's Answer to Jacques Derrida in the *De Doctrina Christiana.''* Summing up the difference between hermeneutic and deconstructive reading, she claims that "In both Augustine's and Derrida's formulation, there is a recognition of the tentativeness of the human interaction with words, but in Augustine's case, it is the potential enjoyment of God that compels human efforts to interpret or make use of them, whereas for Derrida individualistic human efforts are a playful and useless end in themselves" (Schildgen 1994: 395). It is beyond doubt that sixteenth-century readers would opt for the former rather than the latter, and authors themselves displayed considerable anxiety about the possibility of using their texts for particular ends that challenged the providentialist view of socio-political realities (see, for example, David Weil Baker's *Divulging Utopia. Radical Humanism in Sixteenth-Century England).*

original thesis, is fundamental not only to Euphuistic style. According to the French critic, in its purpose and structure *Euphues* was ultimately "nothing but a greatly extended antithesis" (1910: 412, translation mine). This insight encouraged literary critics to broaden the scope of analyses beyond Lyly's prose style and focus on the contradictory nature of literary motifs connected with court culture or humanist learning. The antithetical pattern itself became in turn "a greatly extended ambiguity" where two disparate interpretations of events, situations or notions are ostentatiously played against each other by the author. Because of the pointedly intentional attempt to dwell on this juxtaposition, one could risk calling Lyly's prose work "an anatomy of ambiguity." But there is more to the term, which I will try to prove in my article. First, however, I would like to outline two main tendencies in the criticism on *Euphues* of the last decades and show how they oscillate between ambiguity and indeterminacy.

The Renaissance audience was taken into account as an active agent in creating the meaning of published writing, and therefore a series of twentieth-century analyses, built around "the reader as hero," tried to define Elizabethan readers' sociological "horizon of expectations" and reading practices. The amalgamated ambiguous text was exposed to the indeterminacy of uncontrolled interpretations once it was printed and sold to the general public. Many of the multiple possibilities explored now by the critics can be contradicted by actual recorded responses, scarce as they are. We can only speculate, but court ladies learning whole passages from *Euphues* by heart would probably be shocked to hear Theodore Steinberg's description of their treasured source as an "anti-courtesy book" (1977: 38). The English bishops that involved Lyly in the Martin Marprelate controversy to write the scathing religious pamphlet *Pappe with an Hatchet* (1589) would not order it from an author who got his reputation mainly for producing titillating romances for seedy males admiring "the rhetorical effectiveness of erotic writings by fellow men," as suggested by Helen Hackett (2000: 12). And Sir Philip Sidney, who ridiculed Lyly's references to imaginary minerals and animals, would scoff even more at Richard McCabe's alternative name for *Euphues:* "the anatomy of the process of learning" (1984: 310).

This is of course not to say that these critical suggestions should be dismissed, but our reception of Lyly's prose work is less varied than it was in Lyly's times. The Elizabethan bestseller addressed a wide-ranging readership. As David Margolies explained, there were two implied audiences of *Euphues:* the middle class who ensured Lyly's commercial success, and the aristocracy

who were the actual target readers. The duplicity of possible responses from such varied audiences made for Lyly's ambivalent attitude towards his readers, sometimes humble and sometimes patronizing. Hence the humanist idea that, if the text passively offered thesis and antithesis, it was the reader's task to generate the synthesis through the process of reading in what Arthur F. Kinney (1986: 55) called "the act of triangulation." In practice, because of the risk of indeterminacy, the reader could be always at fault in others' eyes for ignoring either legalistic or subversive hints.

Most recent criticism on *Euphues* seems to follow Wendy Griswold's call for rediscovering "that forgotten soul, the author, who has been deconstructed into oblivion":

> There is no reason why authors, with their intentions, experiences, sociological characteristics, and "horizons" of understanding, cannot be treated in parallel fashion to readers: as agents who interact with texts, working to encode meanings (which may or may not be decoded by any particular group of readers [...]).
>
> (1993: 465)

The focus on the author characterizes three detailed analyses of *Euphues* that have been published in the last ten years. All of them build on Lyly's apparent interest in the surrounding world. In *Elizabethan Fictions*, Robert Maslen (1997: 206) treats *The Anatomy of Wit* as "Lyly's declaration of his affiliation to, and mastery of, a new form of fiction, concerned [...] with a witty imitation of the puzzling complexity of contemporary public and private life." The "puzzling complexity" allegedly stands for the Elizabethan world's own ambiguity, which provokes the author to display his vision of the world as a highly confusing place. Maslen (1997: 203) mentions Erasmus's *Sileni* as the context of Lyly's "delight in the [reality's] disjunction between container and contained, word and matter, public façades and secret agendas." He also discusses at length the depiction of the same blueprint in human nature, "not some godlike humanist intellect but the warring elements and conflicting impulses." Thus, all reality, both on the microcosmic and macrocosmic level, would be treated as ambiguous in an untamed way. A later study, Katharine Wilson's *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narratives*, takes a similar angle and discusses writers and readers featuring within literary works as representatives of "the authors' own uncertainty about the role of prose fiction" (2006: 4-15). In this reading Euphues is a debut writer, the future moral author who turns out to be a mere fool. And Jeff Dolven (2007:239) in turn, claims in his *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* that Elizabethan writers such as Lyly are acutely

aware of the imperfections of the environment that formed them and, as a result, "sabotage their own didactic authority, dedicating and in some sense sacrificing their works to a protest against the training of their best educated readers."

The above-mentioned critics read Lyly's prose fiction as the affirmation of the "ubiquity of ambiguity" (tantamount to indeterminacy), based on the idea of *historia* "captived to the truth of a foolish world" to which the characters, readers and authors respond in bewilderment. Against this apparent universal ambiguity, which in recent decades seems to cater to distinctly modem sensibilities, I would like to set the literary ambiguity that is to be found only within the text. As it was acknowledged by Aristotle and the subsequent centuries of criticism, ambiguity is the matter of language not reality, and Renaissance humanist culture, where language did not reveal or reflect reality but constituted it, was not the one to refute this thesis.

However, textual ambiguity does not automatically eliminate the unease of interpretation. I would like to try to prove that Bahti's theory of a possible juncture between ambiguity and indeterminacy characterizes the text-reader relationship suggested and built on by Lyly and can contribute towards a stable basis for interpreting *The Anatomy of Wit* in a comprehensive manner. This juncture is simply a point of mutual determination between the text and its reading. Instead of trying to find the motivation for reading *The Anatomy of Wit* shared by Lyly's contemporaries, or about his own reasons for writing, it seems an interesting idea to focus on the text and investigate the way in which it anticipates the indeterminacy of interpretations which may easily get out of hand.

Let us therefore focus on the ambiguous text. Lyly's intention to display "the union of opposites" is apparent in his choice of an anatomy, extremely popular in the sixteenth century but until recently not even acknowledged as a literary genre. Devon L. Hodges in his *Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy* (1985) points out that the primary intention of the authors of both "scientific" and "spiritual" anatomies was to offer reliable, consistent scrutiny of reality as they saw it in order to tear apart the veils of human fallacies. But once the apparent unity of a body is dissected, its parts are displaced, never again to form a viable system which the anatomy set out to examine: "the anatomy has a paradoxical doubleness: it is a method for revealing order, but is also causes its decay" (Hodges 1985:6). The early "spiritual" anatomies, which had a distinctly moral character, were concocted to cut away sins in an act of cleansing the body from vice. They could edify the reader by simply identifying the disease; but employed to heal infinitely imperfect mankind, Hodges (1985: 6) argues, the

process would cause not purification, but annihilation. We are led to ask: "Has an anatomy or vivisection been performed?"

Nevertheless, Hodges himself admits that this confusing question would be unacceptable to, e.g. Andreas Vesarius, the author of the anatomy of human body entitled *De Corporis Fabrica* (1543), who saw the body as a "finished product of creation most perfect" and found it intolerable that "the harmony of the human body [...] should lie constantly concealed [...] and that the structure of instruments so divinely created by the Great Artificer of all things should remain unexamined" (Vesarius's dedicatory letter to Philip II of Spain, qtd. in Hodges 1985: 4). It seems that the preliminary assumption of comprehensiveness underlies any Renaissance project of anatomising a part of reality, before it can be refuted or dismissed in interpretation. The absolute of the divine purpose of creation was sought because it was expected to be present, not because people found pleasure in proving that it was not likely to be found.

Such is the case of *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* that practically inaugurated the form of anatomy in England.[2] True, Lyly's work is different from two other best-known Elizabethan anatomies, Phillip Stubbes' *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) and Thomas Nashe's *Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), in that it is not simply a treatise elaborating on a topic, but a plot-driven prose fiction. Consequently, it is not really an anatomy of wit, but of a young wit, Euphues, his vices and virtues, so to say, "in action." However, if we set all three anatomies side by side, we can find a certain unity of the generic purpose that lends coherence to Lyly's project, so often interpreted as self-explosive.

At this point it seems important to mention how difficult it actually proved in the past to define an anatomy as something more than an "assemblage of perspectives" (Scragg 2003:10). The most famous of English anatomies, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), has been classified by Northrop Frye as the Menippean satire, and the critic also argued that the term *anatomy* could replace the name of the genre (1973: 311). This was refuted by Martin Heusser in *The Gilded Pill,* who stated that pigeonholing was exactly what Burton attempted to avoid. Not keen on stopping at vague statements on the one hand and careful not to jump at far-fetched conclusions on the other, I would like to take a look at early English anatomies and try to specify some basic characteristics that texts as different as Lyly's, Nashe's and Stubbs'

[2] The precursors of this form in England, such as Augustino Mainardo's *An Anatomi: that is to say A parting in peeces of the Mass. Which discovereth the horrible errors, and the infinite abuses unknowen to the people, aswel of the Mass as of the Mass book* (1557), did not have the wide appeal that accompanied John Lyly's *Euphues* books.

had in common. I will draw on Devon L. Hodges's insight into Renaissance anatomies, at places trying to modify it to interpret Elizabethan literature in a way that would seem more appropriate to the epoch in question.

Most importantly, anatomies were meant for instruction. Their main function was corrective, and abuses, absurdities or arrogance of youth were anatomized so that they could be evaded. In displaying "abusive enormities," however, the authors felt the need for disclaimers stating that they are well aware of good sides to the sources of controversy, and these statements were followed with prolonged discussions of the positive aspects. It is also quite telling that the authors diagnozed their times to be corrupt and made theological references. Stubbes (1999), e.g. wrote: "I haue aduetured the making of this litle treatise, intituled, *[The Anatomie of Abuses]* hoping that the same (by diuyne assistance) shall somewhat conduce to the building of this spirituall howse of the Lord." Augustine would add: the house built of antitheses.

Another essential characteristic of anatomies pointed out by Hodges was that, allegedly, anatomies by nature ended up being rhetorical or visual displays of their authors' skills, with practically no elusive truths revealed or even approximated. The early anatomists' joy to indulge in the extravagant, florid style and dwelling on contrasts is interpreted as an attempt to conceal this vital lack at the centre of their works. However, arguing *in utramque partem*, i.e. to confront a proposition by its alternative with a flourish of eloquence was a perfectly legitimate and highly valued rhetorical practice and should not be seen simply as deliberate deception. University exams consisted of arguing in favour of the righteous as well as the wicked, and there were textbooks teaching how to win a debate taking the part of a villain. All this was seen as instruction not in dishonesty, but in the intellectual attributes demanded of any well-educated gentleman.

Still, anatomies as "ambiguous," self-contained projects were supposed to be put before a potentially unruly audience. In the ideal world, it would serve "the pleasure of the Godly, and amendement of the wicked" (Stubbes 1999): there would be no place for indeterminacy. But the authors of spiritual anatomies knew what to expect. They reminded their readers to "construe al things to the best" (Stubbes 1999), referred to an Erasmian principle to "learn as well to discern thy loss as thy gain, thy hurt as good" (Nashe 2002: 21) and stated straightforwardly: "let him that fyndeth fault amende it, and him that liketh it, vse it" (Lyly 1967: 183/1). They also felt compelled to evoke the commonplace idea that human mind perceives the outside world according to its own inclinations. The wicked could find fuel for their vice even in the Holy

Scripture.[3] Anatomies, ambiguous literary forms relying on the coexistence of contraries, were deeply concerned with indeterminacy and tried to exorcize the subversive reading by its inclusion in the text. Thanks to its plotline, *Euphues* is particularly successful in this respect. Not only does it depict such a reading on the part of its characters, but also tries to turn the threat of indeterminacy into a medicine. Instead of the standard anatomy concept of a mirror, *The Anatomy of Wit* recommends a dynamic reading procedure. Its readers are supposed to catch themselves trying to hide their defect while they are carried away by the text. In other words, they are supposed to exercise their conscience, while the text remains detached and safe from collapsing into the chaos of indeterminacy.

Thus, against most recent readings I would like to propose that Lyly's *Euphues* is a perfect example of the text as the positive basis for interpretation, rendered self-contained and not self-explosive by the Elizabethan genre of anatomy. Ambiguity, the term used so often in reference to *Euphues*, does not necessitate treating the work like a disillusioned comment, but legitimizes a variety of interpretations "as the actualization, the rendering-meaningful, of the text" (Bahti 1986: 211).

For example, the question that has apparently determined critical response so far is whether the reformed Euphues is the ideal source of moral authority. This problem arises as a result of plot antithesis: the first part, which is a romance, is followed by the conversion of the wicked Euphues and the second, didactic part, with his letters of harsh admonishment addressed to his contemporaries. The fact that the "improved" Euphues finally decides to become a hermit seemed confusing for those who took things at face value, while the attempts to "wake him up" by Lyly's imitators appeared pathetic to others. There is no way to decide conclusively now what Lyly's original intention was, but there is also no need to do so. John Carroll's comment on Elizabethan England could be applied to Lyly's prose fiction: it "was driven mainly by the two dominant cultural forms that carried the age, Puritanism and the civility code of the gentleman" (Carroll 1981: 467). The immense popularity of *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* can be attributed to the fact that it combined the code of courtly gentleman with the code of an austere Puritan in one handy volume. It did not give prominence to any of them: that was done by the readers, who would learn about their partiality on their way through the book.

[3] Nashe (2002: 4), for instance, wrote: "everyone maketh that sacred preservative a pernicious poison unto his sinful soul, nourishing his vanity with sacred verities, increasing his damnation by the ordained means to salvation."

The reason why I call *Euphues* "an anatomy of ambiguity" is that it deliberately presents the juncture between the text and the interpretation, ambiguity of the former and the upcoming threat of indeterminacy in the latter: in short, "the interpenetration of text and interpretation" (Bahti 1986: 211). Being an anatomy, it does not reflect Lyly's preoccupation with the mutability of contemporary world, but highlights the literary combination of opposites that was a perfectly stable basis for analysis. But at the same time, it evidences keen awareness of the indeterminacy of interpretation and tries to indicate wherever it can that "multiple meanings are less *in* the text than they are a difficulty *for* choice" (Jonathan Culler qtd. in Bahti 1986: 210). What modem readers should bear in mind is that it involves the reader in a play of ongoing commentary on a complete text rather than conclusions on an incomplete one.

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Symbolism of Light and Darkness in Selected Prose and Poetry of John Donne

Evelyn Simpson in her critical edition of *The Sermons of John Donne* notices that light, and especially the morning, was among Donne's favourite images. Simpson likewise mentions that of all the Anglican divines of the period, it was only Donne that made frequent use of the translation of *Christ Oriens* as Christ theSww or *East* (Simpson 1964 X: 304).[1] Even in his earlier poetry, John Donne had already demonstrated his fondness for using light and its cognate - the sun - in various conceits, often pointing out the implications of the contrast between light/day and darkness/night. Suffice it here to mention some of Donne's earlier poems, such as "The Sun Rising," in which the indignant lover scolds that "busy old fool, the unruly sun," whose "reverend beams" can be "eclipsed and clouded with a wink," thus demonstrating the power of love. Or the speaker of "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day being the shortest day," who - employing expressions indicating degrees of light and darkness, e.g. "Lucy" (light), day, and "midnight" or "the sun [that is] spent" - refers to himself, again in contrast to the riches of light, as "re-begot of absence, darkness, death." Yet far from this pose of an arrogant or sometimes even desperate lover, it is in the religious works that Donne's use of light and darkness reaches its spectacular heights of metaphysical conceit.

The scope of the present paper does not allow an extensive study of this important topic, therefore demonstration and examination of Donne's ingenious use of the symbolism of light and darkness will take place here only on the example of a few selected religious poems and homilies. The intention of the paper is to prove that in using the images of light and darkness Donne goes far beyond the expectations connected with what has become known as the metaphysical metaphor. The poet-preacher does not merely juxtapose contrasting

[1] The critical edition of John Donne's sermons mentioned here is of ten volumes. When Simpson's commentary in this edition is cited, the number of the volume in Roman numerals, followed by the number of the sermon and finally of the page are provided. In quoting the sermons, the number of the volume is provided in Roman numerals, followed by the number of the sermon and finally of the page.

images for the sake of displaying his intellectual sharpness and impressive wit. It has been claimed that Donne in his religious poetry often employs conflicting images because it is the natural state of a typically "democratic" character who refuses to attach himself to one particular mode of thinking (Coffin 1958: 49). It has also been argued that the metaphysical metaphor so well-known as the literary trademark of Donne has been the emotional by-product of an acute and intense intellectual process (Eliot 1993: 86). In my opinion, this choice of technique springs, especially in his religious poetry, from other reasons. It has its roots in a conscious decision on the part of the poet to go far beyond the limits of language play. The metaphysical conceit is used here to strengthen the power of a deeply religious conviction. The poems and homilies, selected for analysis in the present paper, point at Donne's concentration on one of the most difficult problems - the Christian paradox of suffering. It is in dealing with this question that the poet-preacher most successfully employs the strategy of "conceited" imagery.

The richness and complexity of metaphysical conceit in Donne's religious poetry is best displayed in his use of light. Light is something that not only follows darkness in a logical sequence or order of things. As has already been mentioned, in the Christian world-view light and its cognate the sun have been often used as the metaphor for Christ as the Oriens, the rising Sun that breaks through the darkness of sin and suffering. Thus Donne uses these images not only to show that light follows darkness in the same way that day follows night. Rather, the choice of these contrasting images demonstrates how light, particularly Christ the Sun, not only *belongs* with night-darkness but *breaks through* darkness in "reverend beams." Following the logic implied in the images, the other direction also appears as illuminating: darkness begets light, in the same respect as night "gives birth" to a new day.

Understanding this imagery of night-darkness as the prelude to day-light is something crucial in understanding Donne the speaker's seemingly masochistic choice to persist in night-darkness. This willingness to choose the conditions of night-darkness understood not only as a metaphor for the state of suffering and even sin is explained by the fact that with night-darkness comes day-light. Moreover, with night-darkness standing for suffering-sin comes a union with light-day in Christ the Sun.

In her Introduction to *The Sermons of John Donne* Simpson convincingly argues that the image of light was mostly used by the preacher to describe God's j majesty and mercy (Simpson 1964 X: 303). This was later elaborated into the scripturally inspired symbol of light as the Messiah, to be finally explored as

the "Christ the Oriens" theme, that is Christ as the Rising Sun dispersing the shadows of darkness of sin and strife. If we turn to Donne's poetry, composed in the years preceding Donne's priestly career, we can likewise see the frequent use of the imagery of Christ as Light superior to the rays of the natural sun - the light that rises in the East and disperses not only natural darkness. So, for example, in the poem "Resurrection, Imperfect" the speaker conveys a complex message through the conceit in which "the old sun" (i.e. the natural sun) which went through an eclipse (i.e. darkness) on Friday - the day of Jesus's Passion, is juxtaposed with "a better Sun" - Christ who "enlighten'd Hell/And made the dark fires languish in that vale" (the reference to the power of the risen Christ demonstrated in the Harrowing of Hell). Another example of the similar representation of Christ as East can be found in the poem "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward." Here the speaker juxtaposes the two seemingly contrary poles of his journey, in its geographical and spiritual sense: on a day such as Good Friday, he should have his "soul bent towards the East," but, paradoxically, he is heading for the West:

> Hence is't, that I am carried towards the West
> This day, when my Soules forme bends towards the East. (11. 9-10)[2]

Like in the other poems of that period before Donne's ordination, we can see how the two extreme poles, apparently opposite directions, East and West, are united in Christ. The East, referring to divine majesty in the rising sun and to the Resurrection of Christ, is reconciled with the West, which seems to allude to Christ's death on the cross in the setting of the sun. This is well illustrated in the poem "Upon the Annunciation and Passion falling upon one day. 1608."

> Th'Abridgement of Christs story, which makes one
> (As plaine Maps, the furthest West is East)
> Of the Angels *Ave,* ' and *Consummatum est.* (11.19-21)

In the poem already cited above, "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward," Donne also mentions Christ the Son of God as that sun, which "by rising set / And by that setting endlesse day beget," referring directly to the paradox of the Passion and Redemption:

[2] All the excerpts of Donne's poems are taken from Helen Gardner's edition of Donne's poetry entitled *The Divine Poems.* The numeration of the lines of the selected verses follows this edition as well.

There I should see a Sunne, by rising set,
And by that setting endlesse day beget;
But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall,
Sinne had eternally benighted all. (11. 11-14)

This is the speaker's image of the East where he does not want to go or even look at. This is the place of Christ's Passion, of His "rising on the cross" - the place where the mystery of His Death and Resurrection is demonstrated in the oxymoronic expression "a Sunne, by rising set." Travelling West understood as travelling towards the end of the day, that is night and darkness, is seen here as a conscious choice on the part of the speaker (motivated by "pleasure, or business"). Contrary to Barbara Lewalski's interpretation of the poem, where the rise of emergent business is seen as deliberately used by the poet to demonstrate a disrupted and failed attempt at meditation (Lewalski 1979:279), I would agree along the lines of Louis Martz, who has argued that in the Goodfriday poem the speaker is preparing himself for the meditation of the Cruxifixion of Christ as a prelude to a more interior contemplation of this scene (Martz 1962: 71-72). For, it is in the East that the most important things take place - and therefore spiritually (his "soul's form") - the rising Sun that is at the same time setting (dying) does not initiate eternal night nor darkness, but in thus "setting" in fact begins everlasting light ("endlesse day beget").

Following the images of light and darkness associated with theme of Death and Resurrection, or Passion and Redemption, it is necessary to move to Donne's two later poems, "A Hymne to Christ, at the Author's last going into Germany," most probably composed in 1619, and "A Hymn to God my God, in my sickness,''composed after Donne's illness of the winter of 1622-1623. In the first poem, the speaker after contemplating the "sea of [Christ's] blood," understands the need to unite his own sacrifice to the holocaust offered by Christ. Finally, in a tone of expiation but also of self-giving, the author, in self-abandonment to Christ, closes the poem with the following lines:

Churches are best for Prayer, that have the least light:
To see God only, I goe out of sight:
And to scape stormy dayes, I chuse
An everlasting night. (11. 29-32)

The paradox of darkness and blindness creating ideal conditions for confiding prayer and faith may here be taken to refer to at least two things. Firstly, the speaker obviously means the churches' interiors. The lack of light in a church

facilitates prayer since attention is better focused on the centre of the church, the altar and tabernacle. But the author's readiness to admit blindness ("goe out of sight") in choosing an "everlasting night" also seems to suggest the willingness to experience suffering so as to be more detached from any form of consolation and thus grow in trust and faith in God alone. Here darkness is understood not only as the lack of physical brightness but also as persistence in the darkness and loneliness of suffering and strife. The speaker willingly chooses these conditions, for they allow him to be absolutely detached from any form of compensation, physical or spiritual.[3]

The same ideas were expressed in the homilies, where Donne pointed to the firm trust in Divine Providence in the moments of darkness. The recurring refrain is that of God as the Almighty God of Light, who rules over darkness itself and is able to draw goodness and light even out of evil and darkness. One such fragment worth considering is taken from a sermon preached on Christmas Evening, at St. Paul's Cathedral, 1624. For this sermon, Donne chose to reflect on a verse from the prophet of Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord shall give you a signe; Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and beare a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

> If some King of the earth have so large an extent of Dominion, in North, and South, as that he hath Winter and Summer together in his Dominions, so large an extent East and West, as that he hath day and night together in his Dominions, much more hath God mercy and judgment together; He brought light out of darkness, not out of a lesser light; he can bring thy Summer out of Winter, though thou have no Spring; though in the wayes of fortune, or understanding, or conscience, though have been benighted till now, wintred and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damped and benumbed, smothered and stupefied till now, now God comes to thee, not as in the dawning of the day, not as the bud of the spring, but as the Sun at noon to illustrate all shadowes, as the sheaves in harvest, to fill all penuries, all occasions invite his mercies, and all times are his seasons. (VI: 8, 172)

Donne here mentions God as the Lord of the entire earth, of all seasons, and as the One who brings light not out of "lesser light," but "out of darkness" itself. This "darkness" is meant here as a more spiritual kind of darkness brought about

[3] Clay Hunt (1954: 97) in his book on Donne poetry in fact argues that the central argument of this poem rests on the fruitful use of death and suffering for one's redemption. "The essence of the argument which the rest of the poem develops is that death and physical sufferings of his illness must be accepted willingly: first because it is only through suffering and death that man can reach heaven; second, because this experience forms a requisite of God's dealings with man that are to be just; and finally because Donne himself is confident of salvation through Christ's redemption."

by "fortune, understanding or conscience," hence signifying poverty, ignorance or even sin. It is precisely in these moments of strife that "God comes to thee," Donne continues, "not in the dawning of the day, not as the bud of spring, but as the Sun at noon to illustrate all shadowes [...] to fill all penuries." Christ not only is the Oriens, which is symbolized by the majestic beginning of a new day, but He is the light that shines despite, through and from the darkness of suffering. This theme is further developed by Donne in the Trinity Sermon delivered at St. Dunstan's, April 1627. Here the preacher meditates on the lines taken from Revelation 4:8, "And they do not rest day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is and who is coming.' "

> But even in the depth of any spirituall night, in the shadow of death, in the midnight of afflictions and tribulations, God brings light out of darknesse, and gives his Saints occasion of glorifying him, not only in the dark, (though it be dark) but from the dark (because it is dark). This is a way of unconceivable by any, unexpressible to any, but that be the night what night it will, be the oppression of what Extention, or of what Duration it can, all this retards not their zeal to Gods service, Nay they see God better in the dark, then they did in the light; Their tribulation hath brought them to a nearer distance to God, and God to a clearer manifestation to them. And so, to their Ingenuity, that they professe God, and their Religion openly, is added an Assiduity, that they do it incessantly. (VIII: 1, 53)

It is then the idea described above that underlies the speaker's choice of "an Everlasting Night" in the "Hymn to Christ, at the Authors last going to Germany," It is, as he explains, a consequence of his act of submission to God's mercy. The speaker wants to be wholeheartedly fixed in the contemplation of God, detached from any material and even spiritual consolation. Thus "to see God only," he opts to "go out of sight."

The way that leads from darkness to light, from suffering to God is, what I believe, the south-west discovery mentioned in the poem, "A Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness." To further appreciate this poem, it would be useful to refer to some excerpts taken from two other homilies, one of which was preached in the spring of 1623 on the Penitential Psalms and the other to the King at Court in April 1629.

For the sermon on the Penitential Psalms, Donne chooses to meditate on Psalm 6. 8-10. Here he reflects on the dejection of spirit experienced by King David on contemplating his sins. Donne argues that it is in these moments of being "troubled with a sense of the indignation of God," that precisely is the "storm past," for the soul is "on its way [...] to a calmness." He differentiates

between a dejection of spirit which rests in a faith in God's mercy and the sin of despair. Yet, Donne stresses that even sin itself can be an occasion to be reconciled with Christ. It is true that Christ is the Oriens and Lucifer, Filius Oriens. Yet even if one is "fallen *by* Lucifer and [so long not] *as* Lucifer," then the way already leads to the East, which, should the sinner repent, will eventually open to heaven.

> In a flat Map, there goes no more, to make West East, though be distant in an extremity, but to paste that flat Map upon a round body, and then West and East are all one. In a flat soule, in a dejected conscience, in a troubled spirit, there goes no more to the making of that trouble, peace, then to apply that trouble to the body of the Merits, to the body of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, and conforme thee to him, thy West is East, thy Trouble of spirit is Tranquility of spirit. The name of Christ is *Oriens, The East',* And yet Lucifer himselfe is called *Filius Orientis, The Son of the East.* If thou best fallen by *Lucifer,* fallen to *Lucifer,* and not fallen as *Lucifer,* to a senselessness of thy fall, and an impenitibleness therein, but to a troubled spirit, still thy Prospect is the East, is thy Climate is heaven, still thy Haven is Jerusalem; for, in our lowest dejection of all, even the dust of the grace we are so composed so layed down, as that we look to the East. [...] A troublesome spirit and a quiet spirit, are farre asunder; But a troubled spirit, and a quiet spirit, are neare neighbours. And therefore *David* meanes them no great harme, when hee sayes, *Let them be troubled;* For, Let the winde be as high as it will, so I sayle before the winde, Let the trouble of my soule be as great as it will, so it will direct me upon God, and I have calme enough. (VI: 1, 59)

In this passage, we see how Donne on the one hand argues that the East and West do lie at opposite poles, yet, when "upon a body" which, as he later explains, applies to "the body of the Merits, to the Gospel of Christ Jesus," the East and West are all one. What Donne calls the "body of merits," most probably refers to the Church of Christ, while the "Gospel," to the Word of God. Either way, in the Christian perspective, the East meets the West, and the West, which is sin, suffering and strife, all lead to the East, which is Christ. Hence, as Donne says, he allows himself to be subject to even the greatest forms of suffering, "Let the wind be as high as it will," for "it will direct [him] to God."

Donne further elaborates on the metaphors of the poles of the earth in the sermon on Genesis 1:26, preached to the King at Court, April 1629. Referring to the lines, "God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our likenesse," he divides these concepts geographically and applies them to man. Since Christ is East, a Christian's "East" lies in his "confession of [his] East, that is the

confession of the Trinity. His West lies in his 'faciamus Hominem,' that he is made 'man.'" This Donne expounds further:

> [...] and man there, is but *Adam:* and *Adam* is earth, but red earth, earth dyed red in bloud, in Soul-bloud, the bloud of our soules. To that west we must all come, to the earth. *The Sunne knoweth his going down:* Even the Sun for all his glory, and heighth, hath a going the discomfort of mortality. (IX: 1, 49)

If the West then consists in being made man, that is in "this West [lies the] matter, substance [which] is but earth," then the North consists in the "dissipation of that darkness [...] that we are not all earth." For in man there is a "power" that overcomes that "low and miserable state, *In Imagine."* It is by virtue of this other "image" that man has that other "likeness, form" which "cannot die." It is by virtue of the soul, that immortal form which never yields to physical decay, that man is not pure matter, nor simply earth. Finally, it is in the South that man finds his "highest point." It is in this "Meridionall height" that man finds his "highest elevation." For, it is in this "noon," that man has knowledge that he is of the "image of God himself' (IX: 1, 50).

> And then, whose image and likenesse it is, is our Meridionall height, Our noon, our south point, our highest elevation; *In Imagine nostra, Let us make man in our Image.* Though our Sun set at noon, as the Prophet *Amos* speakes; though we die in our youth, or fall in our height: yet even in that Sunset, we shall have a Noon. For this Image of God shall never depart from our soule; no not when that soule departs from our body. And that's our South, our Meridioniall height and glory. (IX: 1,50)

Thus even in those situations of "sunset - west," or even "sunset - physical death," there shall always be present our "noon, our south point, our elevation." Death cannot destroy nor conquer man's "meridional height and glory." Traversing thus through the south, which is the "divine image" in man, and the west, which is that "purely material," leads to the East, Christ. This is that "South-west discoverie," referred to in the "Hymn to God my God, in my sicknesse," where the idea of geographical south-west passage to the East islands is itself emblematic of death by fever - the sickness that was to kill the poet. But moving from this "south-west discovery" made by the physicians, the poet speaks of yet another, more personal discovery.

> Whilst thy physicians by their love are grown,
> Cosmographers, and I their map, who lie
> Flat on this bed, that by them may be shown

That this is my south-west discovery
Per /return febris, by these straits to die

I joy, that in these straits I see my west;
For, though, their currents yield return to none,
What shall my west hurt me? As west and east
In all flat maps (and I am one) are one,
So death doth through the resurrection. (11. 11 -20)

Of what importance is it that he sees his west, which is death, when he knows that "West and East in all flat maps are one"? He is, he insists, the sinful Adam, crowned with thorns and thrown down. But he is also the new Adam, Christ, who is crowned with victory over death awaiting the promise of resurrection.

We think that *Paradise* and *Calvarie,*
Christs Crosse, and *Adams* tree, stood in one place;
Looke Lord, and finde both *Adams* met in me;
As the first *Adams* sweat surrounds my face,
May the last *Adams* blood my soule embrace. (11. 21-25)

Hence it is this radical unity of East and West, light and darkness, that pervades Donne's prose and poetry and can be taken as a corrective of the rider of "Goodfriday," who though riding westwards, "bends his soul towards the East." In a reluctant and hesistant look at the One whose hands span the poles and who is lifted up on high, through that squinting gaze on that "sunset and noon," that "south and west," the rider in fact understands that it is in the West-death the he is reconciled with the East-life. It is in the same spirit that Donne encourages his listeners to "look towards the East," because Christ "looked into our west, from the east:"

> [...] then we looke towards our East, the fountain of light, and of life. There this world begänne; the Creation was in the east. And there our next world begänne too. There the gates of heaven opened to us; and opened to us in the gates of death; for, our heaven is the death of our Saviour, and there where he lived, and dyed there, and there he looked into our west from the east, from his Terasse, from his Pinacle, from his exaltation (as he himself calls it) the Crosse. (IX: 1, 50-51)

In conclusion it should be stressed that the present paper has been an attempt to demonstrate and examine how in his prose and poetry Donne understood and used the symbols of light and darkness. As has been illustrated above, the poet-preacher employs these symbols with their cognates day and night,

Christ and suffering and sin, building his complex conceits, rich in theological implications. Both in his prose and poetry, Donne shows that darkness is first of all an intrinsic part of light, in the same way that night is of day and sin, and suffering is with Christ. One cannot be fully understood without the other. It is not only for this reason that Donne often juxtaposes these seemingly contrasting symbols. He also makes a conscious effort to choose night, darkness, suffering, precisely because it is not only the prelude but an inseparable part of day, light and Christ.

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“A Spectacle of Blood”: The Art of Suffering in Andrew Marvell’s “The Unfortunate Lover”

‘“The Unfortunate Lover’ is probably the worst love-poem ever written by a man of genius,” wrote H. C. Beeching in the *National Review* in 1901. Despite his generally favourable opinion on Marvell’s lyrics, the critic distinguishes a group of poems which he finds “the least satisfactory” on account of the “little passion” they demonstrate. According to Beeching a good love-poem (and he gives “To His Coy Mistress” as an outstanding example) is “the spontaneous expression of feeling,” preferably the poet’s “individual feeling,” while “passion is allowed to take its natural path” (in Donno 1978: 292). These expectations about the aim and character of love lyrics seem to rehearse a similar conviction expressed earlier by John Dryden about John Donne, who according to the younger poet “affects the Metaphysicks, not only in his Satires, but in his Amorous Verses, where Nature only shou’d reign; and perplexes the Minds of the Fair Sex with nice Speculations of Philosophy, when he shou’d ingage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of Love” (in Smith 1975: 151). While Beeching is looking for genuine passions recreated in a confessional love poem, Dryden would probably be more interested in the way this passion is recreated or created in poetry - genuine or not, love, and not metaphysics, should be the main theme of a love poem.

But is “The Unfortunate Lover” a love poem at all? Generic expectations raised by the title, and to some extent by the first stanza, are not fulfilled. “The absence of courtship” and “the distancing from passion,” as Nigel Smith (2003: 88) notices, make critics turn their interpretative effort towards allegorical reading, be it philosophical, religious or political allegory. Thus, the figure of the suffering lover becomes an allegory of the soul which falls from the eternal bliss into a prison of the mortal body and the finite world ruled by time and “quarrelling elements.” The unfortunate lover is also interpreted as a symbol of Christ, whose dual divine-human nature and ultimate sacrifice the poem seems to represent allegorically. Last but not least, the lover’s story can be an unconventional and obscure (for obvious political reasons) elegy on the death of Charles I, the king-martyr. None of these readings fully solves all the

puzzles presented by the poem, and, as Nigel Smith (2003: 88) rightly observes, this enigmatic lyric "has the ability to ruin the effectiveness of any interpretation, however subtle, which attempts to render it clear." Without aspiring to this interpretative ideal, I would like to concentrate in my paper on the theme of suffering, which is crucial to all the above-mentioned readings, and, definitely, the most manifest emotion constructed in the poem. Even if at first we find it difficult to penetrate into the intricate network of the poem's symbolism, the strongest sensation evoked in the reader is that of the lover's agony. I will try to demonstrate that the way this prolonged torment is rendered in the succession of seemingly conventional images turns suffering into a form of art. This, in turn, invites meta-poetic speculations that can be made on the margins of the more comprehensive allegorical readings of "The Unfortunate Lover."

In another poem by Marvell, "The Gallery" (one of those "least satisfactory" according to Beeching) lovers' passions and hardships are turned into various types of portraits each representing a different pictorial style or genre. Similarly, "The Unfortunate Lover" transforms passions into form, or rather forms, of art, offering a greater variety of pictorial or literary conventions that fictionalise and mythologise the lover's suffering. We can recognise references to two closely related visual symbolic arts - emblems and heraldic devices, both contributory to the Renaissance courtly re-enactments of chivalric tournaments - a type of spectacle which is also present in the poem; while all these forms provide iconographic and dramatic material for the most spectacular pageant of the Stuart times - a courtly masque, to which the poem's great "spectacle of Blood" can be compared.

The premature (enforced by medicinal art of Caesarean section), violent shipwreck-birth of the lover becomes a royal-like occasion to be celebrated with a breathtaking spectacle, in which "Nature to his Birth presents / This masque of quarrelling elements" (11. 25-26).[1] Like the disguised ladies in Samuel Daniel's *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, who dance and leave an offering in the Temple of Peace, Marvell's imaginary masquers offer their gifts to the new-born "unfortunate and abject Heir" (1. 30), though these donators are everything but peace-loving:

> The Sea him lent these bitter Tears
> Which at his Eyes he alwais bears:
> And from the Winds the Sighs he bore,
> Which through his surging Breast do roar. (11. 17-20)

[1] All quotations from Marvell's poem come from George de F. Lord's (1984) edition.

Like Stuart courtiers, the lover, in whose honour this cruel spectacle is held, becomes himself its main actor. But instead of enjoying the harmony and splendour of the main masque, he is thrown, as if by mistake (since this was the realm of professional actors rather then noble masquers [cf. Orgel 1969: 5]), into a topsy-turvy uncontrollable world of the anti-masque (or antic-masque). Surprisingly, in this spectacle the raging elements are not miraculously dispersed by a sudden turn of stage machinery, and the poor lover is entrapped in the succeeding scenes of fighting contraries and unresolved paradoxes.

The scene of raging elements is replaced now by an emblematic pair of voracious black cormorants, cruel guardians who keep the lover alive only to torture him:[2]

> They fed him up with Hopes and Air,
> Which soon digested to Despair.
> And as one Corm'rant fed him, still
> Another on his Heart did bill.
> Thus while they famish him, and feast
> He both consumed, and increast
> And languished with doubtful Breath,
> Th' *Amphibium* of Life and Death. (11. 33-40)

As in the Stuart masque, where the idealised world is fundamentally a Neoplatonic vision, so in this extraordinary image a reader-spectator is referred through verbal allusions to Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, a Christian-Neoplatonic-hermetic-esoteric spiritual credo of an English Neoplatonist. In the first part of his book, having exulted at the perfection of Angels, Browne compares their existence with that of man, reflecting upon our "in-between" status in God's creation.

> These [Angels] are certainly the Magisterial and master pieces of the Creator, [...] the best part of nothing, actually existing, what we are but in *hopes* and probabilitie, we are only that *amphibious* piece betweene corporall and spirituall essence, that middle form that linkes those two together, and makes good the method of God and nature, that jumps not from extreames, but unites the incompatible distances by some middle and participating natures; that wee are the *breath* and similitude

[2] Marvell's cormorants seem to be a peculiar transformation of the Pelican symbolism (especially as the two species of birds belong to the same family). Like the Pelican they feed, and like the Pelican they peck, but not at their own but at the human breast. While the Pelican symbolises Christ's sacrifice that gives life to man, the Cormorants give and at the same time take, feed and famish; they are a paradox pointing to the "amphibious" state of a human being.

> of God, it is indisputable, and upon record of holy Scripture, [...] thus is man that great and true *Amphibium*, whose nature is disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds.
>
> (Browne 1977: 103, italics mine)

While Thomas Browne never despairs about the amphibious condition of man, but rather admires his intermediary-comprehensive-unifying role and stands in awe of God's "method," Marvell, by contrast, concentrates on the strife and suffering brought about by this dualism. His "poor lover" is not a link in the Great Chain of Being, but is tossed between the extremes, Hope and Despair, Life and Death; and due to the rhyming scheme of this stanza the emphasis falls always on the second word of the pair.[3] Thus, even though a Neoplatonic concept of man is implied through an intertextual allusion, the ideal world of the masque proper does not yet appear *deus-ex-machina-\ike* to interrupt miraculously the cruel "spectacle of Blood." The opposites are not "married" to form a perfect union, as in Jonson's masque *Hymenaei*, and the lover is now summoned to face Fortune in a chivalric tournament witnessed by "angry Heaven:"

> And now, when angry Heaven wou'd
> Behold a spectacle of Blood,
> Fortune and He are call'd to play
> At sharp before it all the day:
> And Tyrant Love his breast does ply
> With all his wing'd Artillery. (11. 41-46)

Like Elizabethan courtiers at Accession Day Tilts (cf. Bates 1992: 45-89) or Stuart aristocrats in Jonson's allegorical pageants of *Prince Henry s Barriers* or *A Challenge at Tilt*, the unfortunate lover is made to enact his chivalric romance. However, his combat, though clearly allegorical, seems at the same time disturbingly real, as the opponents "play at sharp," i.e. fight with sharpened

[3] Verbal correspondences between this passage from Browne's book and stanza V of Marvell's poem are particularly interesting, especially as they do not seem to me accidental. First, the words emphasised, *hopes*, *breath* and *Amphibium* appear in the same order in Browne and in Marvell. Moreover, while such common nouns as *hope* and *breath* might have been used by Marvell without any intention to link them with Browne, the poet's borrowing of the Amphibium simile unmistakably points at *Religio Medici*. Thus, it seems possible to assume that stanza V becomes a pessimistic counterpart of the passage from Browne; hopes digest/transform into despair while God's breath of life is "doubtful" or feeble in man, placing him closer to the influence of death than life. This does not have to be Marvell's vision of human condition in general, but an image referring to the unfortunate lover's state at this particular stage of the poem's development.

weapons, to the death. Nor does Hymen come, as in Jonsonian fictional barriers, to reconcile the contestants. Apparently, the lover becomes heroically engaged in a losing battle. Nevertheless, it is this heroic attempt to subdue the raging elements, and not the masque's mechanical magic, that turn the "spectacle of Blood" into an ideal.

"Cuffing the thunder with one hand," with the other grappling "with the stubborn Rock," "Tom into Flames, and ragg'd with Wounds" in this unfair struggle, the lover finally consciously turns suffering into art. Like courtiers fashioning their own symbolic devices in Renaissance tournaments, the lover chooses his own blood to be both his stage-costume and his *impresa',* "a Lover drest / In his own Blood does relish best," he says. Although, after his precipitous and untimely fall in time, he, like a fallen meteor, cannot climb back, yet his heroic stance raises him to the title of banneret whose heraldic device, "in a field *Sable* a Lover *Gules,"* symbolises the bloody victory over black despair and death. Woefully unable to return to the ideal world he fell from, he yet transcends the hostile world of raging elements - dying he metamorphoses into a literary ideal of a chivalric romance ("And he in Story only rules").

These references to masque, tournament, emblems and heraldry that can be traced in "The Unfortunate Lover" may work as an interpretative key to break the poem's "secret" codes; a "key" that operates at different levels of the poem's structure of meaning.[4]

Firstly, on the generic level, the presence of those closely related visual-dramatic-literary forms clearly suggests possible hidden meanings that go beyond the conventions and themes of a love lyric, on account that all these arts were highly symbolic and associated with the Renaissance interest in hieroglyphics. As Vaughan Hart (1994: 61) explains, "Jonson made frequent reference to editions of Ripa's *Iconologia* and Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* when composing the poetics of masque, thus requiring the audience to decipher what he once referred to as 'removed mysteries.'" Hence Marvell's references to masque or heraldry may be treated as the poet's suggestion that also in his poem we should look for "removed mysteries" - allegorical, hermetic or political.

These generic interpretative allusions are inseparable from the potential meaning behind the symbolic veil. If from the methods of interpretation typically applied to masques, emblems or heraldic devices we now turn to the cultural context within which these arts functioned, we may determine which

[4] This metaphorical reference to cryptography is not necessarily accidental or an expression of the author's *licentia poetica,* especially if we consider the troubled times when the poem was written. To some extent this poem can be treated as a "coded" royalist message.

of the allegorical readings of the poem seem most plausible. The predominantly royal character of masques and chivalric tilts (with their use of heraldic devices and emblems) seems to corroborate Charles I's, the king-martyr's substitution for the enigmatic figure of the unfortunate lover. When on 30 January 1649 the Banqueting House, which witnessed so many royal spectacles, becomes the setting for Charles's execution, the king's death becomes a masque-like, though bloody, spectacle; ironically, for ever turning the king into an icon of his royal masques. Similarly, the reality of the turbulent times of the Interregnum is transformed by Marvell into a boisterous world of anti-masque, while the opposite factions become the "quarrelling elements." Thus, the suffering lover who "betwixt the Flames and Waves, / Like Ajax the mad Tempest braves" is the king who heroically fights with his enemies, and with equal heroism meets his death at the scaffold. The magical-miraculous ability to break the anti-masque's evil spell and restore peace and order that the king or queen used to display in a courtly masque,[5] does not seem to have power against the Civil War reality. However, the miracle that Charles's suffering performs is to turn the king into a saint-like figure, making him "rule" if not in his country, at least in the realm of stories and legends. The royal masque's myth-making function finds a surprising epilogue on the scaffold and in Marvell's poem.

While the royal context of the discussed spectacles supports the political allegory behind the poem's enigmatic imagery, the idealism and magical elements of the Stuart masque should refer the readers of "The Unfortunate Lover" to the Neoplatonic concept of the human soul. Though pitilessly removed from its native spiritual element, the soul always tries to ascend to the higher world of Ideas, while the proportions of the human body reflect this higher harmony of the macrocosm. These correspondences and aspirations are present in the symbolic texture of Stuart masques; one may take as an example Jonson's *Hymenaei*, where the union of two people in marriage corresponds to the union and peace between two competing factions within the body politic, and these two earthly types of union reflect the union of the elements and cosmic harmony. Similarly, the unfortunate lover's heroic effort to impose order upon fighting elements may represent such a wish to restore harmony and an attempt to climb to "this region" to which he belongs. However, the masque created in the poem is mostly a chaotic anti-masque, and if any type of tran-

[5] See Jonson's *Hymenaei*, in which James I is called the "Priest of Peace" and Campion's *Somerset Masque*, in which Queen Anne's "Sacred Hand" was required to destroy the power of enchantment and release the captive knights.

scendence is achieved as a result of the lover's suffering and heroic death, it would be transcendence into art.

This conclusion leads to another set of interpretative suggestions afforded to the reader by references to various forms of Renaissance art, and to the masque in particular. The high degree of conventionality characterising the images of suffering turns the reader's attention (probably with some grimace of displeasure) to the convention itself, while frequent verbal allusions to visual, dramatic or literary genres make art and fiction come in focus not only as metaphors or sources of the poem's imagery but also as one of the important themes. What seemed to be simply a vehicle in some metaphors, transforms into the tenor of the whole poem. Thus "The Unfortunate Lover" becomes, on the one hand, a poem about the role of Art in the world where Nature rules, and, on the other hand, a self-referential text commenting on its fictional character and on its ordering power over the uncontrollable matter.

The opposition of Art to Nature is an all-pervasive Renaissance topos and a recurring motif in Marvell's poetry, where it is put to test in the context of various genres, arts or traditions - such as pastoral art and poetry, garden engineering, meditation, language philosophy or the question of social and political retirement. Also in this poem Art is juxtaposed with Nature, but a new viewpoint on this opposition is presented by the poem's reference to the Stuart masque. Studying the relationship between hermetic tradition and art at the court of the Stuart kings, Vaughan Hart (1994: 12) observes that

> The magician, and alchemist in particular, was held in occult philosophy to possess the power to connect earthly things with their archetypal forms, within the realm of Ideas[6] [...]. As an aspect of this, for the Platonist the artist's creation of architecture, painting, and music represented a parallel attempt to transform the lower, earthly world into this higher, angelic world of Platonic perfection. Magic itself laid claim to be the highest of all arts and as such a symbol of human creativity.

At the Stuart court, Ben Jonson, the poet whose allegorical vision opens into the world of Ideas, Inigo Jones, a stage-magician, and the monarch, presiding as a "Priest of Peace" over the spectacle, create an art-form which becomes a "religious ritual blessing the Court" (Hart 1994: 17).[7] In the masque Art has

[6] Reading the poem as a symbolic representation of a violent alchemical process seems to be yet another plausible interpretative option; in this context the image of suffering gains a new alchemical significance.

[7] This king *I* magus / artist "trio" makes us immediately think about Shakespeare's Prospero - a ruler, a magus, and an artist, staging his masque for Ferdinand and Miranda. This association is

magical power over the forces of Nature, harnessing and transforming them into a higher reality.

The unfortunate lover's struggle with Nature is also symbolically transformed into Art. Like a hermetic magus or a Neoplatonic poet, the lover becomes the mediator between the lower and the higher world, with his one hand on the "stubborn rock" and the other turned to heaven. However, in this image, the mediation and the following transformation is fulfilled through strife and suffering. As in the Promethean myth (and the figure of Prometheus is definitely implied in the poem in stanzas V and VII), the gift of Art that subdues rough and hostile Nature is dearly bought; it seems, however, that in Marvell's poem the final act of heroism is brought about by earlier suffering, reversing the story of the wretched Titan (it is Prometheus's heroic act that led to prolonged torment). Be that as it may, unlike the Stuart masque, Marvell presents miraculous transformation of chaos into Art as a painful process requiring sacrifices. The lover dies in the moment of his heroic act of self-creation, "yet dying leaves a Perfume here / And Music within every Ear."

Last but not least, "The Unfortunate Lover" is not only a poem about Art as a philosophical or aesthetic concept; it is a poem that through all its literary, dramatic or pictorial allusions becomes a self-referential poem, turning the reader's attention to its artificial and fictional character as a product of poetic creation. In the last stanza the lover is turned into an emblem of his own heroic suffering, becoming at the same time a hero in a story. The poem itself tells such a story. The lover's fall in time corresponds with his fall into the time of a narrative, as the universal present of the first stanza changes into past tense of a story which starts with the violent birth and ends with the heroic death of the main protagonist. Thus, the poem both describes the lover's metamorphosis into the hero of a story and becomes this story. Similarly, the Art of the poem's form orders the Natural forces of its content. Surprisingly, the poem about violence, turmoil and hostility of the world of matter displays a very regular form. Maren-Sofie Rostvig, examining assumed structural and thematic correspondence between Marvell's "The Unfortunate Lover" and Giordano Bruno's *De gli heroici furori (Heroic Frenzies)*, noticed a similar circular structure in both works. According to her, the regularity of Marvell's poem is revealed "in the form of key concepts strategically placed so as to create a perfectly balanced symmetrical sequence ABCDEFFEDCBA" (Rostvig 1977: 249). The concepts

not surprising if we agree that both Shakespeare's *Tempest* and Marvell's "The Unfortunate Lover" are informed by the same Neoplatonic/hermetic concepts.

behind these letters are key words, the placement of which really creates something resembling a textual mirror reflection, or a number of spheres revolving around the central stanzas IV and V. Thus A stands for *Love* in the first stanza, B and C for *Wave* and *Rock* in the second D and E for *Breast* and *Day* in the third, followed by the repetition of the word *Cormorant(s)* as the centre of this little universe of the poem, on the other side of which, as if reflected in a mirror, appear *day, brest, Rock, Wave, Love* (in stanzas VI, VII and VIII). One may doubt whether these are really the key words-concepts in the poem, or whether the particular structure was borrowed from Bruno, but this conceptual as well as rhythmical regularity of the poem is evident. The ordering power of Art manifests itself in the poem's regular structure and in its highly hyperbolic and conventional images. It may seem at first that throughout the poem we are watching an uncontrollable anti-masque of elements which cannot be miraculously interrupted. However, this spectacle of raging Nature is from the very beginning controlled by the regular form of the poem, just as the Stuart anti-masque is always a spectacle of madness controlled.

Marvell's poem figuratively refers to a spectacle which openly emphasises its artificial character, a dramatic genre in which it is Art that reigns and not Nature (against Dryden's expectations). But in Marvell's poetry Nature is always a domain of chance and passions that should be controlled and subdued by the ordering power of Art.[8] In the masque harmony and balance are achieved both through the art of magic and through the magic of Art. Referring to this myth-making ritualistic spectacle, not only does Marvell offer a number of interpretative keys or praises of Art over Nature, but he also gives Art the power to transcend the world of Nature.

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PART II

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Literature

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Fanny Burney's *Cecilia,* or An Heiress' Search for Meaning in the World of Fashion

Frances Burney's *Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782) is customarily classified as the novel of manners but the text exploits a number of genres and literary conventions. *Cecilia* is undeniably realistic, with its "social analysis [which] is almost Dickensian [in the] forceful sympathy for those whose place in the structure of things is taken for granted," as the blurb of Oxford World's Classics informs. The scope of the picture of the eighteenth-century world of fashion, the multitude and diversity of characters inhabiting it as well as the variety of situations in which they are placed all prepare the ground for the realist novel. The eighteenth-century tale reads, however, as a "grim modem fable," to use John Richetti's phrase (1999: 229). Its theme is the eighteenth-century version of the fight between good and evil over a soul of an individual, that is, the perpetual and irresolvable conflict between the values of the fashionable world on the one hand and reason and virtue on the other - allegorised by characters encountered by the young heroine at the beginning of her adult life. The outcome of the conflation of realism and allegory, however, hardly leads to an unambiguous moral and clear life lesson. The world of *Cecilia* is the world upside down, where masquerades, bankmptcy auctions and suicides are chief entertainments and the order of the day, and the precious few who are rational and virtuous are considered as mad. Burney's romanticised conduct book scarcely instructs its heroine (and readers) how to resolve the inherent contradictions of the eighteenth-century world of pleasure, which functions in clear defiance of reason and Christian charity preached from every pulpit. Rather, it highlights the tragic situation of a novice confronted with the ambiguities of the life of fashion and forced to find a way between the madness of its dissipation and the insanity of non-conformity.

Yet, the novel of manners was supposed to elucidate the world rather than perplex the readers and the heroine. The genre is customarily described as an emplotted form of conduct books, serving the function of the guide to "social etiquette, social discrimination, and ethical conduct" (Kelly 1989: 44). The theme employed to illustrate the desirable and undesirable manners is most aptly

described by the subtitle of Frances Burney's first novel: *Evelina; or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* An inexperienced heroine is confronted with the complex world whose codes, customs, principles and language she is supposed to leam in order to negotiate her place in society. Julia Epstein (1996: 200, 199) describes this kind of a protagonist as a "threshold" or "liminal" character, a character in "a state of ambiguous identity" since she is caught in the "conditional terrain of betwixt and between," between the "emergence from her father's protection and the subsumption of her identity into that of her husband." *Cecilia,* however, is hardly a guide to social etiquette bound by a romantic plot. As Jane Spencer (2007: 30) points out, Burney's novel by the foregrounding of the theme of "choice of life" is transformed from a "mere romantic story" to the story "of serious morality" comparable to Samuel Johnson's philosophical tale *Rasselas.* "Cecilia's love story," argues Kristina Straub (1994: 206-7), "repeatedly intrudes upon her Rasselas-like search for a meaningful 'course of life' outside the framework of love. Try as she does to get on with her life through books, good deeds, and friendship, the romantic extremes of marital bliss versus 'ruin' [...] continue to undermine her sanity to the point of actual madness." The ambiguity of Cecilia's identity initially resultant from her inexperience gives way to the ambiguity caused by her experience of the internally contradictory world, symbolically represented by her mad ramble through the streets of London, "gliding from place to place, from street to street; with no consciousness of any plan, and following no other direction than that of darting forward where-ever there was most room, and turning back when she met with any obstruction" until she fainted in a shop and was taken for someone who "broke lose [sic!] from Bedlam" (Burney 1999: 897).

The persistent ambiguity of the moral is surprising in a tale which otherwise seems like a modem allegory. The construction of the conflict in *Cecilia* is based on the clear-cut opposition of the impersonated vices of the fashionable world and the charity of a single quixotic figure of Mr. Albany, and the characters, despite the profusion of details employed in their characterisation, are perfect allegories for the values of the world. Cecilia's process of socialisation is shaped by conflicting counsels of her three guardians and Mr. Albany's warnings, which lead her to profound perplexity and the ultimate ruin. Mr. Harrel, the epitome of "dissipation" and "unfeeling extravagance" (Burney 1999: 99), unscrupulously preys on Cecilia's goodwill and by emotional blackmail swindles her out of her parents' fortune before his spectacular suicide. The other guardian, Mr. Delvile, represents "haughtiness with ostentation" (Burney 1999: 100), feels contempt

for the Harrels, "whose ancestors, but a short time since, were mere Suffolk farmers" (Burney 1999.- 260), and to Cecilia herself, who is his superior in fortune but inferior in birth. As Mr. Briggs, the girl's third guardian, a scrooge attached to money more than nobility, puts it, "he's [Mr Delvile] counting nothing but uncles and grandfathers, dealing out fine names instead of cash, casting up more cousins than guineas" (Burney 1999: 333). Cecilia, thus, finds herself under protection of three figures representative of three obsessions of the culture to which she is introduced: pleasure, rank and money.

That the allegorical simplicity of the moral significance of the story is merely an illusion is signalled early in the novel in the scene of masquerade. As Terry Castle (1986: 260) explains, this is "the conventional situation: a novice heroine is about to undergo her 'entrance into the world,' an initiation into social life itself. [...] Confrontation with fashionable metropolitan life is Burney's primary metaphor for learning one's place in the symbolic order." Cecilia is the only person undisguised, using the privilege of being the host's inmate, and she is surrounded by masks, who allegorically represent the roles that their owners have to play in her story. Thus, although the usual rule of masquerades is to wear a costume contradictory to one's own identity, Burney uses the motif, as Castle (1986: 263) explains, "in the familiar eighteenth-century comic mode, as a paradoxical transparency of the self [...] Each betrays himself [...] by the oddly lucid form of self-estrangement each has chosen." Castle (1986: 264) describes the rational and comic treatment of the theme as "a suave, unambiguous, entirely rhetorical operation" but the topos has here also an important function to play: it reveals that the masquerade, where guests are expected to attend disguised, is paradoxically the only occasion where people can show their true colours and where the social order is no longer obscured by convenances founded on hypocrisy. Cecilia, as Craft-Fairchild (1993: 4) observes, is presented as a symbol of "a painful submission of the woman to male scopophilia," persecuted by a gang of admirers allured by her beauty and fortune but the only occasion on which she can see it clearly is, paradoxically, the one that requires the disguise of one's true identity.

The masquerade, "the attendant circumstance of wantonly accumulating unnecessary debts" (Bumey 1999: 103), serves also the realistic function of depicting the Harrels' dissipated way of life, which is one of the dominant themes in the novel. The Harrels' lifestyle is, however, hardly exceptional in their times. Historians describe the eighteenth century as characterised by unprecedented consumerism in middle-class circles. As Maxine Berg (2007:21) explains, the eighteenth century is a period when luxurious goods "[l]uxuries,

formerly negatively associated with foreign imports and with elite ostentatious display, gave way to consumer goods identified with middling-class domestic interiors and dress. Distinctive British consumer goods connected the middling classes to an economy extolling the virtues of quality, delight, fashion and taste, comfort and convenience, and variety and imitation" and defining the status in fashionable society (Berg 2007: 29-31). Small wonder then that the rise of materialist philosophy of life, so radically opposed to Christian glorification of non-material values, provoked comments from philosophers, who emphasised the discrepancy between, as E. J. Hundert (1997: xxiv) describes it, "divine injunctions and everyday behaviour," the latter of which required following the standards of fashion. Bernard Mandeville, Hundert (1997: xxv) explains, demonstrated that

> [p]ersons in the recently constituted commercial polities [...] were obliged [...] to respond to a revised structure of priorities if they were to satisfy their impulses. [...] Mandeville showed that the aggressive pursuit of wealth had now to be understood not as an activity properly confined to marginalized minorities, but as central to the self-definition of urban and commercial populations.

The evaluation of the social consequences of the growing importance of consumerism was not, however, unified. Mandeville's treatise, for example, aimed to demonstrate its public utility, Frances Burney's *Cecilia*, by contrast, joined moral condemnations of the emerging code of conduct and showed it as a violation of common rules of decency and reason, leading to madness and unhappiness.

The language, pursuits and values of London polite circles in *Cecilia* - all defy the rules of common sense. The world of fashion appears to be governed by a certain logic but this is a logic that resembles that of madness, as is described by Michel Foucault in his *Madness and Civilisation.* Foucault (1988: 108) associates madness not with "reason diseases, or as reason lost or alienated, but quite simply with *reason dazzled'."*

> Dazzlement is night in broad daylight, the darkness that rules at the very heart of what is excessive in light's radiance. Dazzled reason opens its eyes upon the sun and sees *nothing,* that is *does not see [...]*
>
> To say that madness is dazzlement is to say that the madman sees the daylight, the same daylight as the man of reason (both live in the same brightness); but seeing this same daylight, and nothing but this daylight and nothing in it, he sees it as void, as night, as nothing; for him the shadows are the way to perceive daylight. Which means that, seeing the night and nothingness of the night, he does not see at all.

> And believing he sees, he admits as realities the hallucinations of his imagination and all the multitudinous population of night.

Cecilia is surrounded by dazzled figures who act on their own irrational logic. Miss Larolles is the first of the uncritical eulogists of her world, oblivious of its fissures, even if they are pointed out to her.

> [Miss Larolles] beg[ged] leave to recommend to her [Cecilia's] notice her own milliner.
> "I assure you," she continued, "she has all Paris in her disposal; the sweetest caps! the most beautiful trimmings! And her ribbons are quite divine! It is the most dangerous thing you can conceive to go near her; *I never trust myself in her room but I am sure I will be ruined.* If you please, I'll take you to her this morning."
> *"If her acquaintance is so ruinous, " said Cecilia, "I think I had better avoid it."*
> "Oh impossible! There's no such thing as living without her. To be sure she's shockingly dear, that I must own; but then who can wonder? She makes such sweet things, 'tis impossible to pay her too much for them." (Burney 1999: 28-29)

In the world of fashion, where rank and affluence, or at least their appearances, determine the position in society, words of common sense are drowned in the music and murmur of receptions and masquerades, which provide the opportunities to exhibit the luxury goods.

Even the auction sales of bankrupts' property fail to provoke alarm and bring to the senses those in the mad pursuit of costly pleasures. The truth about the madness of such lives seems to be abundantly clear to the outsiders but not to those who belong.

> While they were yet at breakfast, they were again visited by Miss Larolles. "I am come," cried she, eagerly, "to run away with you both to my Lord Belgrade's sale. All the world will be there; and we shall go there with tickets, and you have no notion how it will be crowded."
> "What is to be sold there?" said Cecilia.
> "O every thing you can conceive; house, stables, china, laces, horses, caps, every thing in the world."
> "And do you intend to buy any thing?"
> "Lord, no; but one likes to see the people's things."
> Cecilia then begged they would excuse her attendance.
> "Oh by no means," cried Miss Larolles, "you must go, I assure you; there'll be such a monstrous crowd as you never saw in your life. I dare say we shall be half squeezed to death."

> "That," said Cecilia, "is an inducement which you must not expect will have much weight with a poor rustic just out of the country: *it must require all the polish of a long residence in the metropolis to make it attractive.*
>
> (Burney 1999: 31; italics mine)

Cecilia views the "monstrous crowd" and "see[ing] other people's things" - and Miss Larolles assures her that "it will be the best sale we shall have this season," since "the creditors have seized everything" - for what they are. She looks upon "continual dissipation as an introduction to vice" and "unbounded extravagance as a harbinger of injustice," and they are in conflict with "the sobriety of her education, as it had early instilled into her mind the pure dictates of religion, and strict principles of honour" (Burney 1999: 32). Miss Larolles, however, fails to perceive their sinister aspect and regards them as nothing short of fashionable entertainments.

The same dazzlement of reason is manifested by Mrs Harrel, Cecilia's guardian's wife, whom the ward strives to dissuade from her dissipated lifestyle: "to retrench her expences [sic!], and change her thoughtless way of life for one more considerate and domestic," warning her that "in time her income by such depredation will be exhausted." Earnest though they are, all the attempts to open the woman's eyes to the danger of bankruptcy come to no avail. "Mrs Harrel, with much simplicity, assured her *she did nothing but what everybody else did*, and that it was quite impossible for her *to appear in the world* in any other manner" (Burney 1999: 193).

> The madman [argues Foucault] is not so much the victim of an illusion, of a hallucination of his senses, or of a movement of his mind. He is not *abused;* he *deceives himself.* "We call madmen," Sauvages was to say, "those who are actually deprived of reason or who persist in some notable error; it is this *constant error* of the soul manifest in its imagination, in its judgements, and in its desires, which constitutes the characteristic of this category." (Foucault 1988: 104)

Mrs Harrel becomes an unconscious prisoner of her image of reality, which she cannot go beyond. Like Foucault's madman, she seems to be "inside the image, confiscated by it, and incapable of escaping from it." She "never oversteps the image presented" but "surrenders to its immediacy," unable to act like "a reasonable man who, rightly or wrongly, judges an image to be true or false [...] transcends and measures it by what is not itself (Foucault 1988: 94).

Mrs Harrel is immune to all calls of reason. "O, it's a very good proposal, that I agree," she responds to Cecilia's plans of reform, "but only the thing is

it's quite impossible." When importuned as to the reasons why, she repeatedly asserts: "Lord I can't tell - but I know it is - because - I am very sure it is" (Burney 1999: 194). Cecilia, as Burney describes it, "grieved at her blindness" (Bumey 1999: 195) and vexed by the new expenses incurred to deceive the world where bankruptcy seems inevitable, exclaims: "Who then at last [...] are half so much the slaves of the world as the gay and the dissipated?" (Bumey 1999: 360). Appearances, however, can rarely be kept for long if cash runs low. Mr Harrel's suicide in the fashionable gardens of Vauxhall, among the crowds of the fashionable people like himself, is its best evidence. Yet, even the extremity of death fails to awaken the people of pleasure from their dangerous delusions.

It is noteworthy that in the madness of the fashionable world, the only person who is capable of challenging its values in the open is considered as a madman. Mr. Albany, as Mr. Gosford, who serves Cecilia as a guide through the world, explains:

> seems to hold mankind in abhorrence, yet he is never a moment alone, and at the same time he intrudes himself into all parties, he associates with none: he is commonly a stem and silent observer of all that passes, or when he speaks, it is but to utter some sentence of rigid morality, or some bitterness of indignant reproof.
>
> (Bumey 1999: 69)

He acts like a prophetic figure who in the sinful world of dissipation scares and annoys the people of fashion pointing to them their hideous vanities. Miss Larolles complains, "[o]ne day he came up to me all of a sudden, and asked me what good I thought I did by dressing so much" (Bumey 1999: 290). Captain Aresby has a similar story to tell: "once he took the liberty to ask me, what service I was of to the world! and another time, he desired me to inform him whether I had ever made any poor person pray for me" (Bumey 1999: 290). Mr Albany clearly does not fit the world he haunts: by his appearance - "I happened to fall a laughing at his going about in that old coat" (Bumey 1999: 290), - or by his language - "without any seeming effort or consciousness, he runs into blank verse perpetually." What is, however, most singular is "the matter of his discourse" (Bumey 1999: 291).

Mr Albany's philosophy of life is defined in the total opposition to the principles of the world in which he lives. One of the characters describes it as strange, although it is a reflection of nothing but Christian charity, which was preached from every pulpit: "he thinks the whole world made to live in common, and that every one who is poor should ask, and every one who is

rich should give" (Burney 1999: 209). Yet, the world fails to live up to the simple biblical standards so Mr. Albany's diagnosis of the world is blunt: folly, idleness and luxury have replaced virtue in the life of fashion.

> "Oh times of folly and dissipation!" [...] "Oh mignons of idleness and luxury! What next will ye invent for the perdition of your time! How yet further will ye proceed in the annihilation of virtue!" (Burney 1999: 66)

And then he adds, stressing the defiance of the biblical principles of charity:

> "Oh objects of penury and want!" .. ."Oh vassals of famine and distress! Come and listen to the wantonness of wealth! Come, naked and breadless as ye are, and learn how that money is consumed which to you might bring raiment and food!" (Burney 1999: 67)

The impassioned speeches of Mr. Albany delivered in public places fail to produce the desired effect. For the fashionable company he remains a *"crazy-man"* and a *"bore"* (Burney 1999: 67), which is the best illustration of the low esteem his values have in society.

Madness in Cecilia's world is defined as a refusal to conform to the general protocol of life, however illogical and uncharitable it would be. Mrs. Harrel repeatedly asserts she cannot mend her life since "it's what nobody thinks of' and "one must live like other people" (Burney 1999: 194) to the outrage of Cecilia herself, who regards the conformity as an act of gross irrationality:

> But were it not better [...] to think less of *other people,* and more *of yourself?* To consult your own fortune, and your own situation in life, instead of being blindly guided by those *other people?* If indeed *other people* would be responsible for your losses, for diminution of your wealth, and for the disorder of your affairs, then might you rationally make their way of life the example of yours: but you cannot flatter yourself such will be the case; you know better; your losses, your diminished fortune, your embarrassed circumstances will be all your own! Pitied, perhaps by some, but blamed by more, and assisted by none! (Burney 1999: 194-95)

Much as Cecilia condemns her friend's conformity with the insanities of the fashionable world, she herself is scarcely prepared to utterly reject it. Cecilia's personality may well be characterised by a "strong sense of DUTY, a fervent desire to ACT RIGHT" as well as a firm conviction that "her affluence" was but a "debt contracted with the poor, and her independence, as a tie upon her liberality to pay it with interest" (Burney 1999: 55). She, however, wants the firmness of character indispensable to defy the world in the open. When

approached by Albany in public, she tries to avoid his company. "I will not only hear, but thank you for your precepts, if you will forbear to give them before so many witnesses," she implores in "a low voice." Mr. Albany clearly resents the "false delicacy" in her:

> "Whence," cried he sternly, these vain and superficial distinctions? Do you not dance in public? What renders you more conspicuous? Do you not dress to be admired, and walk to be observed? Why then this fantastical scruple, *unjustified by reason,* unsupported by analogy? Is *folly* to be published? Is vanity alone to be exhibited? Oh slaves of *thoughtless contradiction'.* Oh feeble followers of yet feebler prejudice! Daring to be wicked, yet fearing to be wise; dauntless in levity, yet shrinking from the name of virtue!" (Burney 1999: 293; my emphasis)

Mr. Albany equally forcefully protests against the insincere polite formulas of the language employed by people of fashion. Having been greeted by Cecilia with the usual expression

> "How little, Sir, [...] did I expect this pleasure."
> "This pleasure," repeated he, "do you call it - what strange abuse of words! What causeless trifling with honesty! is language of no purpose but to wound the ear with untruths? Is the gift of speech only granted us to pervert the use of understanding? I can give you no pleasure, I have no power to give any one, you can give none to me - the whole world could not invest you with the means!" (Burney 1999: 702)

The hypocrisy of the culture is ingrained in its idiom - Cecilia's mastery over it is symbolical of her, if only partial, inclusion in it. Mr. Albany's refusal to compromise with the insincerity, dissipation and uncharitability of the world puts him on a par with madmen, although what he calls for is truth and virtue. Cecilia is thus confronted with a choice between the mad reality of the world of fashion and the knight-errantry of Mr Albany, and she fails miserably. Too timid to choose Mr Albany's lifestyle and devote her life and fortune to charity, which was her original plan for life, enamoured with young Deville, whose father obsessed with the family pride objects to his heir's acceptance of the wife's name, Cecilia forfeits her fortune and autonomy.

Burney's novel thus, allegorical as it may seem, hardly brings a moral. The struggles to reconcile various claims laid on its heroine by society and her own conscience, though apparently resolved by a moderately happy ending, fail to mark the way out of the perplexity that a process of initiation into society is bound to produce. Although the story concludes with Cecilia's "imperfect" happiness and reconciliation with the truth "that of the few who had

any happiness, there were none with some misery" and bearing "partial evil with chearfullest resignation" (Burney 1999: 941), Burney's novel does not show the way to follow. Her conduct book remains ambiguous as to what code of conduct would allow to remain in agreement with one's integrity and the strictures of the world. And thus the true conclusion of the novel seems to be the scene where Cecilia, penniless and bereft, rambles the streets of London until she faints in a shop and is taken for a lunatic and nursed by its owners in the expectation of a reward for taking care of a gentlewoman. This is where Burney portrays most aptly the implausibility of constructing an unambiguous book of conduct in the self-contradictory world of fashion of the eighteenth century.

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The Ambiguity of Violence in the Poetry of Robert Browning

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long.
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die. (Oscar Wilde, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," 1898)

"All the major [Victorian] poets turned their attention to issues of sexual attraction and repulsion, if not violence. More forcefully than other discourse of the time, poetry opened up a space where the awkward tensions between sexual longing and being could be closely investigated" (Bristow 1991: 128). From this assertion, it is clear that Joseph Bristow considers violence to be innately connected to "sexual attraction and repulsion," and suggests that the relationship between sexual impulse and violence can be most searchingly and eloquently expressed in poetry, for example, that of Robert Browning. Whilst there is certainly an inextricable link between sexual impulse and violence in poems such as Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess," depictions of violence in Browning's poetry are suggestive of rather more than

mere sexual conflict, and may be considered representative and reflective of wider conflicts, for example, those within the individual psyche, and within the male creative personality; tensions between the desire of the individual and repressive Victorian censoriousness; and the disparity between idealised expectations of femininity and the voracious male fascination with the illicit.

Jan Marsh attributes the opposition between the idealisation of the feminine and desire of the illicit to "rapid and immense social and economic change" and its "corresponding cultural repercussions," claiming that "changes in patterns of work and family life [...] established new structures of feeling and representation whereby women were both elevated and constrained, worshipped and restricted to specific roles" (1987: 10). However, the incongruity between male expectation of the feminine ideal and desire of the sexually illicit was by no means unique to the Victorian male, as illustrated by Tertullian's (c. 160-220 AD) description of the female as the ambiguous "temple built over a sewer," simultaneously divine in her purity and sordid in her sexuality. The Janus-faced image of women as divine and woman as sordid occupied a significant position in the Victorian consciousness, and is embodied by the virtuous Rose, the heroine of Tennyson's "The Gardener's Daughter," and the subject of Julia Margaret Cameron's photograph, and Keats's femme fatale, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," painted by John William Waterhouse, respectively. These conflicting notions of "woman as desirable, woman as chaste, woman as dutiful, woman as witch" (Marsh 1987: 9) result in the male confusion and conflict of emotions that can be observed in Browning's "Porphyria's Lover," published in *Dramatic Lyrics* in 1842. Porphyria is both the feminine domestic ideal - "straight / She shut the cold out and the storm, / And kneeled and made the cheerless grate / Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;" - and unashamedly sexual in her gentle caress of the speaker - "She put my arm about her waist, / And made her smooth white shoulder bare, / And all her yellow hair displaced, / And, stooping, made my cheek lie there" (11. 6-9; 16-19).[1] Her partially unclothed state provides a subtle illustration of the speaker's conflicting emotions. Bristow (1991: 132) explains that the female body is seen as "a sight of purity in its nakedness," yet to the speaker, Porphyria's purity, represented by her "smooth white shoulder," is tainted by her association with wider society, symbolised by the clothes that she has not removed - the symbols of the soiled world outside the cottage, a world in which she is prevented from

[1] All quotations from Browning's poetry are from *A Critical Edition of the Major Works.* Ed. A. Roberts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

loving him openly by societal strictures, and those restrictions placed upon the "worshipped," ideal woman.

The paradoxical perception of the female as both "a sight of purity" and irrevocably tainted leads to equally paradoxical demands on femininity made by the male. Porphyria's lover desires to preserve this moment in which she is solely his - "mine, mine, fair, *I* Perfectly pure and good" (11. 36-37) - yet in strangling her, he irrevocably destroys the warmth, passion, adoration and attention that he so deeply desires. Her very presence in his cottage would be considered morally transgressive by society, yet he, believing that she is "too weak, for all her heart's endeavor / To set its struggling passion free *I* From pride, and vainer ties dissever" (11. 22-24), seeks to protect her from further moral transgression through infidelity by murdering her. The speaker is caught between Victorian society's insistence upon moral rectitude and his own powerful yearning for sensation and intimacy. Similarly, in Browning's "My Last Duchess," first published in the 1842 collection, *Dramatic Lyrics,* the jealous Duke wished to be the sole object of his wife's attention and adoration, yet in orchestrating her death, has deprived himself of that pleasure. He wished her to be simultaneously more attentive to him, and less appreciative of others. Thus, we see that these acts of violence committed by the speakers are bom of confused and conflicting emotional reactions to the feminine. Browning proves himself to be intelligently aware of Victorian society's paradoxical embrace of both moral rectitude and the desire for the illicit, and the violent bewilderment that results.

In an attempt to stave off the confusion of the "soul made weak by its pathetic want," *(The Ring and the Book,* XXI. 1. 559), Browning's speakers often seek to control the feminine; physically, mentally and verbally. In "Porphyria's Lover" we see how the speaker attempts to control and manipulate Porphyria, first with his sullen, spiteful silence, reflected in the "sullen wind" that "tore the elm-tops down for spite" (11. 2-3), then with brute force. Roma A. King (1968: 71) describes how "he resents her strength, although perhaps subconsciously." In the first section of the poem, Porphyria occupies the active role - "she sat down by my side / And called me. When no voice replied, / *She* put *my* arm about her waist" (11. 14-16, italics mine) - and it becomes clear that he believes that, in strangling her, and thus relegating her to the passive role, he has "righted things and assumed the normal masculine role" (King 1968:72). There is a deliberate reversal of the action as the speaker describes how, "Only this time, *my* shoulder bore / *Her* head, which droops upon it still" (11. 51-52, italics mine). However, he fails to comprehend that it was *his* misguided strategy of

control - his dour passivity and silence - that *forced* her to occupy the active role. Indeed, it is arguable that the entire poem represents a "misguided strategy of control'' on the part of the speaker. He attempts to rationalise his murderous act, blaming her "pride" and attachment to "vainer ties," yet the highly patterned rhyme scheme - ABABB - is at odds with his reasoned self-presentation. The intricacy of the rhyme scheme makes his colloquial, even casual tone seem unnatural and incongruous, prompting the reader to doubt the speaker's apparent rationality. Even after her death, the speaker seeks to control Porphyria, projecting onto her his own desires and insecurities, as he says, "The smiling rosy little head, / So glad it has its utmost will, / That all it scorned at once is fled, / And I, its love, am gained instead!" (11. 53-56), and justifies his violence as the fulfilment of "her darling one wish" (1. 57). Thus we see that a triple act of violence and control has been committed against Porphyria. His passiveness forced her to take charge of the situation, and then he punished her for her cheerful occupation of that active role by strangling her, then sought to justify his violence by projecting his desires onto her. Browning's sensitivity to the complexities of human relationships allows him to recognise that passiveness can paradoxically be used as a violent means of manipulation and coercion.

In direct contrast to Porphyria's lover, in "My Last Duchess" the Duke adopts a strategy of verbal activity rather than passiveness in an attempt to control his late wife. The Duke glibly and seemingly confidently directs the conversation and attention of the internal addressee towards the portrait, and attempts to demonstrate his mastery over his late wife through speech. However, his speech reveals his deep insecurities and inability to control his reaction to his wife, even after her death. The use of enjambment means that there is no sense of psychological or linguistic closure at the end of lines, but rather a sense of urgent, even uncontrollable compulsiveness behind the Duke's revelations. This impression of lack of control is compounded by the subtle change from masculine to feminine rhyme, as the Duke explains, "She had a heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad, / Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er she looked on, and her looks went everywhere" (11. 21-23). Max Keith Sutton (1969: 285) describes how "the tempo accelerates with the addition of a slight syllable at the end of a line, making the utterance sound full of energy and vehemence." This is suggestive of the playful, innocent feminine energy of the Duchess breaking though the rigid verbal control of the Duke, as he fails to repress his violent reaction to the memory of his wife's vitality.

That the Duke is still threatened and intimidated by that vitality and innocent sexuality is suggested on two levels within the poem: firstly, by his conscious

insistence that the portrait is veiled - "(since none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)" (11.9-10), and secondly by his hesitations and demurrals, which suggest discomfort and anxiety, for example, in lines 22, 32 and 36.[2] It is clear that Browning's male characters are highly vulnerable to the latent charms of the female. Indeed, in "Women and Roses," published in Browning's 1855 collection, *Men and Women,* the male speaker promises his beloved that he would gladly "break my heart at your feet to please you! / Oh, to possess and be possessed!" (11. 19-20). Thus, the violent reaction of both Porphyria's lover and the Duke may have been a subconscious act of self-defence, born of a fear of self-extinction at the feet of the beloved, intended to destroy the female that threatened to completely ensnare them.

Marsh (1987: 12) describes how the female figure in Victorian poetry and Pre-Raphaelite art "represented the artist's own soul, the creative impulse of his art" - a notion explored in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's prose piece "Hand and Soul." However, Marsh fails to recognise that whilst the female represents the artistic soul, the male speaker in Browning's poems often represents the artist's physical being, desiring to visually capture something of the female. For example, in "Women and Roses," the speaker exclaims, "Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb, / You, great shapes of the antique time! How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you?" (11. 17-18). He wishes to capture and preserve the beauty of the female object in the same way that an artist wishes to immortalise the beauty of his subject or give visual form to his inspiration. Similarly, the Duke wishes to "fix" his wife by turning her in an *objet d'art,* which can be controlled with what Laura Mulvey (1975: 11) terms "the male gaze," which tends towards "a certain violence; penetrating, piercing, fixing." Carol Christ (1987: 386) attributes a similar "gaze" to Tennyson's male protagonists, describing how "Tennyson frequently presents poetry as an erotic theft through which the male incorporates a power he locates in the female. This theft is most often defined in visual terms, as an unauthorised gaze through which the poet steals the power that generates his art." However, the Duke does not appear to derive any creative power or confidence from the portrait, because, as Mulvey (1975: 13) explains, "woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified."

[2] "She had / A heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad" (11. 21-22); "She thanked men - good! But thanked / Somehow -I know not how - as if she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody's gift" (11. 31-34); "Even had you skill / In speech - (which I have not) - to make your will / Quite clear [...]" (11. 35-37).

That the female figure is intended as a representation of the artist's own creative energy initially seems problematic, as an act of fatal violence against the poetic rendering of the anima-figure would seem to symbolise the self-destruction of that very creative inspiration. However, William O. Raymond (1950: 209) suggests that the female figure is also representative of "abstract idealism," which is pitted against "masculine realism." Thus in "Porphyria's Lover" Porphyria represents the "abstract idealism" that naively leads her to believe that she can maintain a healthy relationship with a man of a lower socio-economic class in a class-conscious society, whereas the speaker represents the unfortunate reality of that injuriously class-conscious patriarchal society which leads him to harm her jealously. Porphyria, innocently unaware of the tensions that socio-economic difference causes between them, is also representative of Browning's "artistic inheritance of the ideals of Romanticism, as represented by the poetry ofShelley" (Raymond 1950: 195). Thus, the speaker's actofviolence against her is representative of the tension that existed between Browning's residual Romantic idealism and the mood of moral righteousness that pervaded Victorian society, though for Browning, such tension was employed construc-tively and creatively. Raymond (1950: 211) asserts that "Browning is prone to make his characters voice his own ideas, to grant them only semi-independence, or even reduce them to mouthpieces of his personality." If this is true, then an act of violence against the female is an enactment of the intellectual violence of the conflicting beliefs, opinions and emotions of the poet.

Such conflicting emotions and desires can be observed in Browning's "Two in the Campagna," first published in *Men and Women.* The speaker wishes to "pluck the rose" (1. 48), yet is troubled by the intangible presence of a "fault" or "wound" in their relationship (11. 39-40). Bristow (1991: 137) describes how the speaker, though "guided towards this divine act of sexual union, [...] none the less fears violating the woman's individuality." The tension between these desires is augmented by lines in which the speaker sincerely voices a desire for union, then immediately negates or qualifies it for fear of her subjection, for example when he says, "I would that you were all to me, / You that are just so much, no more. / Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!" (11. 36-38). The moral dilemma is also physically enacted in the line, "No. I yearn upward, touch you close, / Then stand away" (11. 46-47). The ultimate irreconcilability of these desires - to both sexually possess the woman and leave her free to retain her individuality - is subtly expressed in the image of the "thread the spiders throw / Mocking across our path" (11. 8-9), which long eludes his grasp. The speaker asks his beloved, "Help me to hold it!" and "Hold it fast!" (11.

11; 20). However, despite the speaker's obvious concern for the interests of his beloved, she is largely absent from the poem; his personal predicament is privileged over hers. Although not through physical violence, she too, like Porphyria and the Duchess, is denied a voice.

A similar conflict of male desires pervades "Women and Roses." The speaker wishes to "make an Eve, be the artist that began her, / Shaped her to his mind" (11. 46-47), yet recognises that "women faded for ages, / Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages" dull in comparison to the "women fresh and gay, / Living and loving and loved to-day" (11. 6-9). The impossibility of "shaping" a woman to his mind, yet leaving intact her personality and vitality is encapsulated in the phrase, "Drink but once and die!" (1. 23). The speaker may "shape" her to his taste, but her individuality will "die" in the process. Bristow (1991: 134) observes an ethical point in the poem: "that women should not be entrapped by a male's all consuming desire. Women have the right to resist a male impulse that seeks to 'fix' its object." This reflects Browning's "firm commitment to the [notion of the] liberal subject; a free, independent and ostensibly ungendered being" (Bristow 1991: 129).

It is clear that Browning was deeply concerned with the freedom of the individual and the moral responsibility connected to that freedom. Marsh (1987: 152) suggests that the depictions of female characters such as Porphyria, the Duchess and Tennyson's Lady of Shalott are intended to communicate not only the implicitly criticised "confined and restricted world of the Victorian woman" but also "the dire consequences attendant on rebellion." Marsh's suggestion prompts us to consider whether Browning intended to convey a moral precept through his depiction of violence against the female. Whilst he no doubt wished to explore the complex rationalisation behind the punishment of the female, nothing in the poetry suggests that he is expressing a personal belief in her moral delinquency. Indeed, in "My Last Duchess," the reader is encouraged to view the Duchess as merely innocently vivacious and charming. In "Porphyria's Lover," the speaker convinces himself that his act of violence was a pre-emptive punishment for her inevitable infidelity. As in many Victorian texts, her "yellow hair" (1. 17) is symbolic of sexual potency and female desire, and it is deeply significant that he strangles her with the very symbol of the sexuality for which he is punishing her. However, the reader is left in no doubt that the speaker is mentally unstable, thus fatally undermining the legitimacy of his moral judgement. Far from criticising the female, Browning's depiction of violence is in fact a subtle condemnation of Victorian society as a whole. The advent of sensationalist novels and tabloid newspapers, both due to the

creation of a mass reading public, led to the normalization of violence, and a desensitised readership. Fed with lurid stories every day, the public came to regard such violence as hackneyed. This is suggested in "Porphyria's Lover" as her strangulation is described in a conversational, even blase tone - "I found / A thing to do, and all her hair / In one long yellow string I wound / Three times her little throat around, *I* And strangled her" (11. 37-41). Browning's depiction of this fatal act is intended to shatter that sense of complacency and provoke a sudden, sincere emotional reaction, and in the process illustrate the disturbed condition of the Victorian psyche. Raymond (1950:203) suggests that "in order to accentuate the poignancy and arduousness of this process, the poet dwells with unflinching realism on the grim potency of evil and suffering." However, Browning recognised that evil could often appear attractive and charismatic. In "My Last Duchess," the Duke says, "Notice Neptune, though, / Taming a seahorse, thought a rarity" (11. 54-55), and we are led to identify the Duke with the impressive image of the god. King (1968: 69) describes how "the artistry of the object suggests a certain perverse beauty in the Duke and explains partly why we have been temporarily captivated by him. Upon reflection, he is likely to seem repugnant."

One of the guises in which violence may "captivate" the imagination and appear attractive is that of Imperialistic ambition. Browning's depictions of violent acts committed against women could be considered to be metaphors for acts of imperialist violence committed against subject nations. Edmund Dowden (1915:111), however, argues that Browning does not "anywhere study political phenomena or events except as they throw light on individual character," and would thus be more interested in the individual instance of violence, than in its metonymic potential for the illumination of "political phenomena or events." That said, Browning would have surely perceived and appreciated its effective metaphorical or metonymic potential. Like the female, the subject nations were considered to be what Edward Said described as "the Other" - ultimately unknowable in their dissimilarity. The misconstrued innocent vitality and sexual allure of Porphyria and the Duchess can be likened to the native traditions and cultures that were similarly suppressed by British Imperialism. Bristow (1991: 141) claims that Browning seeks to "estrange eroticism from Imperialism" in "Love Among the Ruins," first published in *Men and Women*, by emphasising the contrast between the lovers' embrace and the "whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!" (11. 81-82) caused by violence and warfare, and each stanza formally emphasises the schism between past and present. The speaker longs to mentally and physically disconnect from the "million fighters" of the past, and voices

a desire to "Shut them in, / With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!" simply concluding, "Love is best" (1. 84). Despite this attempt at estrangement, or perhaps, suppression, Bristow (1991: 141) questions "what act of war might the male speaker be committing on the woman that awaits him?" Her "yellow hair" calls to mind the unfortunate Porphyria, and we cannot help but wonder how long it will be before the speaker grows suspicious of her "eager eyes."

It seems that the Victorian male poet faced a double crisis of gender, so to speak. He experienced not only the inevitable uncertainty of a man in a society which simultaneously idealised and demonised, desired and despised women, but also an anxiety about how the writing of poetry was to be reconciled with the new Victorian ideal of "entrepreneurial manliness" (Sussman 1995: 82). Dorothy Mermin (1986: 67) notes that "for the Victorians, writing poetry seemed like woman's work, even though only men were supposed to do it [...] Male Victorian poets worried that they might in effect be feminizing themselves by withdrawing into a private world." What has come to be the stereotypical (though now somewhat discredited) image of the Romantic poet - a fey, solitary figure, isolated from the male sphere of commerce, governed by "feminine" imagination rather than "male" rationality - loomed large in the Victorian period, and male poets, such as Browning and, in his later work, Tennyson, sought to "recover a male identity though remasculinization" (Shires 1987: 269).

In "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Andrea del Sarto," both published in *Men and Women*, Browning presents a male artist figure attempting, with varying degrees of success, to reconcile his occupation with the Victorian ideal of "entrepreneurial manliness." Both poems suggest that artistic potency is inextricably linked to male sexual energy and commercial success. However, with characteristic subtlety, Browning, despite portraying Lippo as commercially successful, and creatively and sexually potent - the apparent epitome of "entrepreneurial manhood" - suggests that there are inherent and insoluble contradictions within that ideal. As such, Browning's male artist figures are haunted by fears of emasculation, and the kind of violence that is elsewhere inflicted upon Browning's female characters. For example, in "Fra Lippo Lippi" it appears to Lippo that a guardsman holds aloft "John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair / With one hand [...]/ And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!" (11. 34-36). This ominous image is compounded by the Prior's reference to "Herodias, [...] *I* Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!" (11. 196-97). Lippo attempts to assert his masculine autonomy, declaring, "I'm my own master, paint now as I please," but then continues, "Having a friend,

you see, in the Comer-house!"(ll. 226-27). Lippo, despite his protestations of independence, is as dependent upon his influential Medici patron as any wife upon her husband, or whore upon her client. Indeed, Rossetti (1965-67: 2. 1175) wrote in a letter to Ford Madox Brown in 1873, "I have often said that to be an artist is just the same thing as to be whore, as far as dependence on the whims and fancies of individuals is concerned." The "munificent House" that "harbours" Lippo also, in a sense, imprisons him (11. 29). He is forced to suppress his sensual nature, as the Prior orders him:

> ignore it all,
> Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
> Your business is to paint the souls of men -
> [...]
> Give us no more of body than shows soul! (11. 181-88)

For Lippo, as for Browning's female characters, to display his sensual nature would be to incur punishment and disgrace. In order to be economically successful and retain the favour of his influential patron, he must suppress his male sexual energy, yet in doing so, he cannot achieve the ideal of "entrepreneurial manliness," which the poem ostensibly celebrates.

It is clear that Browning found violence to be an abundant source of literary inspiration, and that the depiction of the violent act allowed him to explore the underlying tensions and oppositions that pervaded the dramatically changing Victorian society, and characterised the contradictory attitudes towards the female and the feminine, and the subsequent insecurity of the male. Browning recognised that violence could take many forms, and could appear behind the guise of passivity, suppression, or feigned moral righteousness. As with all of Browning's themes and subjects, violence is never straightforward or unambiguous, either in its motivation, its depiction or its perception. The complexity and acuity of Browning's depiction of violence engages the reader on both an intellectual and emotional level, and so we, as readers, are intellectually and emotionally implicated in the poem's search for meaning.

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"Knitting the Days Away": Needlework in Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel*

When the ten-year-old Jane Eyre arrived at Lowood school, one of the first questions she was asked was whether she could "read, write, and sew a little" (Bronte 1994: 45). Sewing, then, was a necessary element of a girl's education, on a par with reading and writing, and it formed a significant part of a woman's life: "one of the great silences about women's lives was undoubtedly filled with needlework [...] middle-class women were constantly sewing, and their daughters were taught to do so from the age when they could grasp a needle" (Davidoff and Hall 2002: 387). In *The Sampler* (1855), E. Finch, who describes needlework as "Art [which] is useful, and indeed indispensable to women of all ranks" (1855: xi), indicates the necessity of teaching poor girls the art of the needlework, as it might be the means of improving their condition and add to their happiness (1855: x). Writers of the period often stressed the practical advantages of the dexterity with the needle but needlework had also acquired associations with feminine virtues and, for both reasons, it was considered an accomplishment necessary to a woman of any class. As Maitzen indicates, "to lack this skill was to appear not just ill-trained but unfeminine" (1998: 63).

The meaning of needlework in Victorian culture, however, is ambiguous and far more complex than its interpretation as a signifier of domestic femininity and feminine virtues might suggest. Margaret Oliphant, who, in Langland's words, challenges "so many Victorian sacred cows" (1995: 153), does not seem to embrace the sentimentalised views either on femininity or needling but rather subscribes to the more critical attitudes, evident also in other texts from the period (see Maitzen 1998: 67—70).[1] Her *Salem Chapel* (1863), for instance, does not present needlework as an ennobling activity, but rather as a drudgery performed either for lack of other occupation or for money. The novel features

[1] Maitzen mentions a writer in the *Athenaeum*, who believes needlework to be "as injurious to mind as it is to bodily health" (quoted in Maitzen 1998: 67). Several female writers, including Margaret Oliphant, George Eliot and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose very identity as authors depends on their putting aside the needle (which symbolises a feminine occupation), see in needlework a symbol of "the enforced and stifling leisure" (Maitzen 1998: 70).

two prominent needling characters: Mrs Hilyard and Adelaide Tufton. When Mr Vincent, the new minister of Salem Chapel, visits Mrs Hilyard in her humble abode, he assumes that she is an impoverished gentlewoman reduced by some unfortunate circumstances to earn her living by slopwork. Undoubtedly affected by contemporary representations of seamstresses as martyrs sacrificed on the altar of capitalists society, he does not realise that far from being an innocent victim, Mrs Hilyard oversteps the norms of acceptable behaviour for a lady: not only does she leave her good-for-nothing husband and conceals their daughter's whereabouts, but also she threatens to kill him and almost manages to carry out the threat. Adelaide Tufton, in turn, is the old minister's crippled daughter, whose major entertainment is knitting and gossip, and who observes Mr Vincent's career in Salem Chapel with great interest. Neither Mrs Hilyard's application to the coarse sewing, however, nor Adeleide Tufton's eternal knitting, make them paragons of womanhood or contribute to the development of superior feelings of sympathy and love. By presenting the clash between Mr Arthur Vincent's sentimental reading of Mrs Hilyard's plight and reality, as well as by substituting the idealised angelic middle-class needling woman with the rather uncanny figure of Adelaide Tufton, Oliphant ironically subverts the cultural icon of needlewoman.

The figure of a needlewoman, often identified as specifically Victorian (Alexander 2003: 24), had acquired by the nineteenth century a great symbolic richness, "the ideological and cultural legacy of the previous three hundred years" (Maitzen 1998: 63). In the nineteenth century, amateur needlework, retained its connotations from the Elizabethan period with "leisured, well-bred femininity" (Maitzen 1998: 63), and thus it was a signifier of rank as well as of taste and refinement. Simultaneously, however, as needlework was a skill taught to women at all levels of society[2], it could be seen as "a bridge between the classes" (Alexander 2003: 20)[3], obliterating class differences, as not only rank,

[2] Victorian writers stress that needlework is an occupation for all classes. "Needlework appears to have been not only a pastime for noble ladies but the principal occupation, as a source of pecuniary advantage, for women, from the most remote periods [...] from time immemorial, it has ever been the constant amusement, and solace, of the leisure hours of royalty itself' (Lambert 1842: 1); "From the stateliest denizen of the proudest palace, to the humblest dweller in the poorest cottage, all more or less ply the busy needle; from the crying infant of a span long and an hour's life, to the silent tenant of'the narrow house,' all need its practical services" (Stone 1840: v).

[3] Because of the positive associations of needlework and gentility, needlework became one of the very few possible professions for middle-class women in reduced circumstances. "Needlework's association with middle-class gentility made working in a dress-shop like a step up the social ladder for the former [lower-class girls], and only a small step down for the latter [middle-class women]"

but also the moral virtues associated with rank, were symbolised by needlework. Maitzen indicates that in the seventeenth century, when needlework was "one of the primary means by which every girl was trained in her society's ideology of womanhood," samplers were indicative not only of "specific stitching skills" but, more significantly, of "self-discipline, patience, and industry" and "other desirable virtues such as piety, obedience, submission, and resignation" (1998:63). The "little dainty tool," as Craik(1858: 81) called it, and needlework in general, became a visible manifestation of invisible virtues, which underlined a woman's domesticity and her social role as it was conceived in the Victorian period. The association of needlework with gentility and genteel virtues, in turn, explains why a poor seamstress, rather than any other figure, came to represent victims of the industrial revolution and symbolise social inequalities. As a woman embracing middle-class moral values implicated by her occupation, she "was someone to whom readers could respond without prejudice" (Alexander 2003: 9), and with whom they could identify "either as women who sewed or as men whose mothers, wives and sisters sewed" (Alexander 2003:9). Although she embodied the suffering of the working classes, she "escaped the stigma of being a factory worker" (Alexander 2003: 9), "presented no threat to the status quo" and "[t]here were no images of mob scenes or riots surrounding her" (Alexander 2003: 25); in contrast to "the feisty, independent, relatively well paid factory woman who had embodied the working woman in the 1830s" (Rogers 1997: 590), a seamstress "provided a feminine worker who could easily be tied to more traditional symbols of hearth and home, often heightened by ties to a past rural environment, and, indirectly, reinforced a sense of paternalism in the calls for reform" (Alexander 2003: 10).

The fate of poor seamstresses in the Victorian period became the subject of parliamentary reports, journal articles[4] and fiction.[5] A seamstress was a figure

(Maitzen 1998: 94-95). Moreover, because of the association of sewing with domesticity and domestic middle-class virtues, a needlewoman forced to work for wages, became a very potent symbol of social injustice and of victims of industrialism.

[4] Whereas fiction and art tends to romanticise the image of a seamstress, the reports or at least some journal articles present a more realistic, if also more gruesome picture of the seamstress's life, which would, however, prove "unpalatable to many Victorian viewers" (Edelstein 1980: 196).

[5] The figure of an exploited seamstress appears, to mention just a few examples, in Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), Charlotte Tonna's *The Wrongs of Women* (1844), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *Ruth* (1853), or less known *Lucy Dean: the Noble Needlewoman* (1850) by "Silverpen" (Eliza Meteyard's penname), not to mention "Song of the shirt" by Thomas Hood, which became an inspiration for artists and writers alike.

frequently depicted by Victorian artists[6], especially since Richard Redgrave's presentation of his picture "The Sempstress" (1844).[7] Consequently, when Oliphant's protagonist, Mr Arthur Vincent, meets Mrs Hilyard, "working busily at men's clothing of the coarsest kind, blue stuff which had transferred its colour to her thin fingers" (Oliphant 1986: 20), and continuing her work during their conversation "without ever raising her eyes, intent upon the rough work which he could not help observing sometimes made her scarred fingers bleed as it passed rapidly through them" (Oliphant 1986: 21), he cannot but perceive her through the prism of his own preconceptions fostered by similar scenes proliferating in art, novels and daily press, where a needlewoman was usually presented as a blameless victim of the capitalist society. Thomas Hood's famous poem, "The song of the shirt" (1843), for instance, describing a seamstress "With fingers weary and worn,/With eyelids heavy and red" (Hood 1861: 193) and stitching "in poverty, hunger, and dirt" (Hood 1861: 193) is a potent source of imagery. Victorian seamstress paintings, which tend to romanticise the figure of a needlewoman, however, might have had an even more powerful hold on Victorian minds. Many of the paintings follow the fashion established by Redgrave's picture, which "creat[ed] a visual iconography echoed in some way by all subsequent versions of the motif' (Edelstein 1980: 185) and which "embodies the Victorian vision of the needlewoman" (Edelstein 1980: 188), present a single female figure in circumstances not much different from those in which Mr Vincent finds Mrs Hilyard. They show "an isolated figure of sorrow and suffering, with only background details - the late hour as indicated by a clock and guttering candles, the ill health indicated by the medicine bottles with hospital labels, or the lack of food indicated by empty cupboards and dirty cups but no plates" (Alexander 2003: 11). The meagre but neat attic room, often overlooking a church tower[8], which usually forms the background for the presentation of the needlewoman, becomes in the novel "a shabby room, only half-carpeted, up two pairs of stairs, which looked out upon no more lively

[6] For example J. T. Peele's "The Seamstress" (1852), Anna Blunden's "For only one short hour" (1854), or George Elgar Hicks' "Snowdrops"; see the list of seamstress artwork in Alexander 2003: 229-232.

[7] Richard Redgrave painted two versions of the picture, one was presented in 1844, and the other is dated 1846. The second version includes details that make the fate of the poor seamstress even more dreary than in the first version (see Wood 1976: 126)

[8] Edelstein believes that the church tower visible through the window in the pictures presenting a needlewoman might suggest the passage of time, the clock in the tower chiming hour after hour (1980: 202)

view than the back of Salem Chapel, with its few dismal scattered graves" (Oliphant 1986: 19-20).

In addition, Mrs Hilyard, although neither extremely beautiful nor young, as it was frequently the case in Victorian depictions of a needlewoman, is nevertheless perceived by Mr Vincent as evidently more genteel or cultivated than her surroundings seem to suggest, and thus she seems to correspond with the conventional image of a seamstress, who, as "a martyr to modem urban society" (Edelstein 1980: 190), is portrayed in a way that evokes saintly imagery (Edelstein 1980: 190). Mr Vincent claims that "the most ignorant could not doubt for a moment [Mrs Hilyard's] perfect superiority to [her surroundings] - a superiority so perfect [...] that it is not necessary to assert it" (Oliphant 1986: 64). Even her "extreme thinness of outline and sharpness of line" seems to Mr Vincent a sign of refinement, as it is clearly contrasted with "the faces which had lately surrounded the minister" (Oliphant 1986: 19), the faces of the Tozers, the Browns and the Pigeons who live "[a]mid their rude luxuries and commonplace plenty" (Oliphant 1986: 16), and especially with the "plump and pink" Phoebe (Oliphant 1986:13). Mrs Hilyard's is an "educated countenance," and although "[i]t was not a profound or elevated kind of education, perhaps, [...] it was very different from the thin superficial lacker with which Miss Phoebe was coated" (Oliphant 1986: 19). When their first interview comes to an end, Mr Vincent feels "as if he had been dismissed from the presence of a princess" (Oliphant 1986: 23) and he is left to wonder

> Who she was or what she was - how she came there, working at those "slops" till the colour came off upon her hands, and her poor thin fingers bled - she so strangely superior to her surroundings, yet not despising or quarrelling with them, or even complaining of them, so far as she could make out - infinitely perplexed the inexperienced minister. (Oliphant 1986: 23)

Mr Vincent, however, has rather "mistaken notions of himself and those around him" (Terry 1983: 79), and his romanticised perception of Mrs Hilyard proves misguided. Rather than being an exploited but virtuously passive and helpless woman, Mrs Hilyard turns out to be more like a sensation heroine, whose violent passions and rejection of accepted norms of feminine behaviour render her a morally ambivalent and dangerous character. She is not a saint or an angel but, in the words of her husband, she might be a "she-wolf" (Oliphant 1986: 106), a "she devil" and "a murderess" (Oliphant 1986: 107). Her life was one "where volcanoes had been, and earthquakes" (Oliphant 1986: 22): she deserted her husband and threatened to revenge herself on him and kill

him (and actually made an attempt to do so) should he try to snatch their daughter from her. Unlike Redgrave's "single figure," which "shows that this woman is alone and defenceless, without the protection of a husband, a family, or friends" by which he "exploits the Victorian conception of the necessity for a woman to exist under male protection" (Edelstein 1980: 188-189), Mrs Hilyard's loneliness, resulting from her desire to protect her daughter, becomes a sign of her defiance and a refusal to accept a life with a brute of a husband, and her work signifies her hard-won independence.

Sensation seems to be completely absent in the life of another needling woman in *Salem Chapel*, Adelaide Tufton. As a disabled daughter of the old minister, she is sentenced to lifelong confinement at home, an existence that can only be diversified with her knitting and gossip. Interestingly, her disability might be read simultaneously as a metaphor for an angelic woman's limited existence and for the distortion, not just of her body, but also of the Victorian feminine ideal. Adelaide is

> [a] very pale, emaciated, eager looking woman, not much above thirty, but looking, after half a lifetime spent in that chair, any age that imagination might suggest; a creature separated from the world - separated from life, it would be more proper to say - for nobody more interested in the world and other people's share of it than Adelaide Tufton existed in Carlingford. (Oliphant 1986: 25)

Her physical weakness and bad health suggested by her paleness and emaciation can be read as a distorted reflection of an angelic woman's physical frailty and delicacy. Her forced domesticity and her gloating on gossip echo a Victorian angel's seclusion and life experienced vicariously, through men. The suggestion that she exists, as it were, outside time, unaffected by it, refers to an angel's "suprahuman powers" (Auerbach 1982: 64).

Neither does Adelaide's knitting quite fit the Victorian conception of needlework as the labour of love enhancing feminine virtues. The nineteenth-century discourse presents the needle as one of the major attributes of a woman, and needlecraft signifies "the intangible and heavily class-inflected traits putatively fostered by rigorous application to this difficult and tedious technical skill: elegance, taste, and refinement indicate affluence united with good breeding" (Maitzen 1998: 65) as well as a woman's role in society:

> Who amongst us has not a great reverence for that little dainty tool; such a wonderful brightener and consoler; our weapon of defence against slothfulness, weariness, and sad thoughts; our thrifty helper in poverty, our pleas friend at all times? From the first "cobbled-up" doll's frock - the first neat stitching for mother, or hemming of

> father's pocket-handkerchief - the first bit of sewing shyly done for some one who is to own the hand and all its duties - most of all, the first strange, delicious fairy work, sewed at diligently, in solemn faith and tender love, for the tiny creature as yet unknown and unseen - truly, no one but ourselves can tell what the needle is to us women. (Craik 1858: 81-82)

Not only does Craik, in the apologia for needlework, evoke the virtues traditionally associated with it - industry or thrift - but she also represents it as a labour of love (in contrast to labour for wages, which is the domain of men), and she delineates the stages of a woman's life - as a daughter, wife and mother - by presenting different applications of the needle. Similarly, in *The Illustrated girl's own treasury* the anonymous writer extols needlework as an expression of love and care:

> [needlework] brings daily blessings to every home, though unnoticed, perhaps, because of its hourly silent application. In a household each stitch is one for comfort to some person or other; and without its very watchful care home would be a scene of discomfort indeed. In its ornamental adaptation, it delights the eye, amuses the mind, nay, sometimes cheats grief of its sorrow; but, more than all, gives bread to thousands. The women of every nation, from time immemorial to the present, have beguiled their hours with the needle [...]. Upon all classes and in all climes this simple instrument has bestowed a varied charm. (Craik 1858: 79)

Needlework is presented as the essence of a woman's life, both work and amusement, an expression of taste and of a practical sense. Both Craik and the anonymous author, vindicate this rather simple and trifle activity which, however, contributes to happiness of the loved ones and their welfare.

Adelaide Tufton, however, knits for nobody and for no purpose: "during [her] long seclusion, [she] had knitted as all Salem Chapel believed, without intermission, nobody having ever yet succeeded in discovering where the mysterious results of her labour went to" (Oliphant 1986: 25). Her incessant work is exposed as drudgery whose only purpose is to kill time while leaving her mind free to indulge in local gossip. In fact, Adelaide seems to be totally deficient in the love and sympathy which were supposed to distinguish the Victorian angelic woman. She analyses human feelings in the cold and disengaged manner of a scientist. When she torments Mr Vincent with questions about Lady Western's marriage she "did not show any pleasurable consciousness of her triumph; she kept knitting on, looking at him with her pale blue eyes. There was something in that loveless eagerness of curiosity which appalled Vincent" (Oliphant 1986: 442). "[A] certain mischievous and pleased satisfaction" that

she experiences in the "probable discomfiture" of the object of her attention (Oliphant 1986: 31) seems to be the only emotion she experiences.

Adelaide's incessant knitting, her isolated existence and the almost inhuman impermeability to emotion make her an uncanny figure. Her life seems to be unaffected by any change as if she existed outside time; she is like a goddess or an angelic woman, who "in some curious way inhabits both this world and the next" (Gilbert and Gubar 1984: 24). When Mr Vincent came to see Mr Tufton after all the painful events that had shaken his own life, he is surprised to find everything unaltered:

> Had time really gone on through all these passions and pains, of which he was conscious in his heart? Or had it stood still, and were they only dreams? Adelaide Tufton, immovable in her padded chair, with pale blue eyes that searched through everything, had surely never once altered her position, but had knitted away the days with a mystic thread like one of the Fates. (Oliphant 1986: 440)

Adelaide's days, where the passage of time is marked only by the clicking of her knitting needles, seem to embody the mundane existence of a Victorian angel, as contrasted with Mr Vincent's more eventful life. To Mr Vincent, Adelaide "conveyed an idea of age" (Oliphant 1986: 27) and death:

> He came away with a strange impression on his mind of that knitting woman, pale and curious in her padded chair. Adeleide Tufton was not old - not a great many years older than himself. To him, with the life beating so strong in his veins, the sight of that life in death was strange, almost awful. [...] if he came here ten years hence, he might still find as now the old man by the fire, the pale woman knitting in her chair, as they had been for these six months which had brought to the young minister a greater crowd of events than all his previous years. When he thought of that helpless woman, with her lively thoughts and curious eyes, always busy and speculating about the life from which she was utterly shut out, a strange sensation of thankfulness stole over the young man; though he was miserable he was alive.
>
> (Oliphant 1986: 445)

For Adeleide, imprisoned in her disabled body and in her padded chair, her home becomes a tomb. But if her existence is much like death, so is the life of an angelic woman (Gilbert and Gubar 1984:24-26), excluded from the world of action and held down by trifles. Adeleide's purposeless knitting, which seems to be the only activity, save gossip, left to her might be read as the symbol of an angelic women's stultifying existence.

The meaning of needlework is, then, destabilised in the novel: no longer presented as an expression of female perfection, needling is exposed either as

drudgery and a symbol of stifled, death-like existence or as an expression of defiance. The conventional, that is, sentimentalised reading of needlework is misleading, and Mr Vincent can only find out the truth if he rejects simple interpretations. Not only do Mrs Hilyard and Adelaide resist conventional readings, but also they repeatedly point to Mr Vincent that his ideas about life are too romantic (that is, untrue): Mrs Hilyard accuses him of "talking romance and nonsense, quite incomprehensible in a man who had just come from the society of deacons" (Oliphant 1986: 89), and Adelaide Tufton refuses to invent any comforting fiction to console him: "If I were a clever romancer like some people, I could have made it all perfect for you, but I prefer the truth" (Oliphant 1986: 29). The incongruity between the conventional representations of needling women and the two characters in Oliphant's novel force Mr Vincent (and the reader) to question his ability to read cultural signs, and compel him to reject their conventional meaning.

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Lewis Carroll's *Alice* Books: A New Perspective

Defining the Concept

My paper deals with an analysis of Lewis Carroll's *Alice s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* from a schema theory perspective. This approach provides me with the perfect tool for analysing these ambiguous and controversial texts. The concept of schema theory can be best defined as "a body of ideas which has passed from psychology, through Artificial Intelligence (Al) and into discourse analysis" (Cook 1994: 9). In the first part of my article I will define schema theory giving a brief description of its origins, general principles, terminology and main concepts.

Although the notion of schema theory as a mental representation can be traced back to Kant's *Criteria of Pure Reason* (1787) (the German word is also schema) the origin of modem schema theory can be found in the Gestalt psychology of the 1920s and 1930s (Cook 1994: 9). Its basic argument is that a new experience is understood by comparison with a stereotypical version of a similar experience kept in memory (Cook 1994: 9). The new experience is then defined in terms of its deviation from stereotypical version or conformity to it. The theory can be applied not only to the processing of sensory data, but also to the processing of any written text (Cook 1994: 9).

Both Semino (1995) and Cook (1994) noticed an increased interest in the application of schema theory to the analysis of literary readings. This has resulted from the awareness of the connection between "background knowledge and interpretation variability" (Semino 1995: 84). According to Muske quoted in Semino, the attractiveness of schema theory to literary scholars resides mainly in the fact that it offers a flexible framework "within which to investigate the interplay between reader's knowledge of the world and texts in literary comprehension" (1995: 84).

Cook (1994: 15) distinguishes three main types of schemata: world, text, and language schemata. By world schema one must understand schematic representation of the world e.g. conference schema; by text schema, schematic representation of certain text types. For example, diary writing obeys certain text

patterns. Language schema represents schematic representation of the language we use for certain given situations (e.g. the language we use when we are at a cocktail party is different from the one employed at a conference). Deviation at the level of text and language disrupts the reader's schema, causing according to Cook (1994) schema disruption or breaking which consequently results in schema change or schema refreshment. Cook (1994) also introduced the concept of schema adding when we deal with a reinforcement of the existing schema.

The second part of my paper proposes an analysis of *Alice* books only from the perspective of text schema. Textual schemata are perhaps more reader-variable than world schemata or language schemata. They depend very much upon experience of other texts, and this is more likely to vary between individuals than experience of the language and of the world. A given text, for instance, may appear highly original to a particular individual, but very unoriginal to another, if the former has experience of other texts, with the same structure, while the latter has no such experience (Cook 1994).

Lewis Carroll's *Alices Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* are no exceptions to these rules. Furthermore, the reader-variability or text schemata have given rise to many interpretations, some of them more "original" than the text itself, others purely speculative or, on the contrary, very relevant. In fact, *Alice* books are notorious as being the battle-grounds of interpretative disagreement. They have been analysed many times over according to the tenets of different critical approaches. This large number of interpretations is also due to the fact that *Alice* books are meant both for children and for adults alike.

Fairy-tale Schema

Alice in Wonderland and *Through the Looking-Glass* were initially written for children and the first text schema activated at a superficial reading of the two books, is that of a fairy tale. First of all, Wonderland and the Looking Glass country stand for "the other world" often met in fairy tales as an alternative reality to the actual one. The heroine, Alice has to pass through an intermediary space placed between reality and non-reality in order to enter the other world: the rabbit hole, the glass, doors, etc. Sometimes the entrance into the other reality is marked by interdiction: i.e. the doors to the Wonderland are all locked. Secondly, the creatures that inhabit this alternative magic world are animals or flowers that can talk, mythical animals, the Gryphon, the Unicorn. To all these we may add queens, knights in armour and kings.

In almost all fairy tales metamorphosis is a common theme. Alice changes her size and shape very often and this change in form is rendered possible by eating or drinking magic potions. The initiatic journey full of obstacles that the hero and heroine has to go on in order to achieve a final goal is also present, especially in *Through The Looking-Glass* when Alice has to overcome some obstacles in order to become queen. Some critics have interpreted this initiatic journey as a necessary step towards reaching maturity. But even though, the fairy-tale schema has some elements to sustain it: the other reality, metamorphosis, initiatic trip, it is immediately challenged and refreshed. This is the reason why many children, especially those who have read a translated version of *Alice* books, are disappointed by the story. They expect the pattern of a fairy tale and while reading *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, they confront the stories with the background knowledge of fairy tales. Their expectations are, of course, not fulfilled. The fairy tale schema is just the superficial level of the two stories. The elements that disrupt the schema can be easily found. A main difference between the classic fairy tales and *Alice* books is the latter's main concern with language. "All that happens, happens in language and through language"[1] (Deleuze 1969: 34, my translation). The other world is not the realm of princesses, witches, fairies but the abstract world of language; it is almost a non-referential world. The two books can be considered "the prison house of language," a syntagm used for experimental literature.

Furthermore, the characters inhabiting the magic realm of fairy tales are, of course, endowed with supernatural powers, but still their behaviour and language resemble very much that of normal people, whereas the other world proposed by Lewis Carroll governs itself after different rules. The creatures of Wonderland refuse any connection with reality. It is almost impossible to imagine the Mad Hatter or the March Hare inhabiting the magic realm of fairy tales, they would be too "mad" for them. Their unique preoccupation seems to be no sorcery or the preparation of magic potions but the abstract function of language. The initiatic trip, mentioned above becomes a mock one. Carroll clearly scorns any moralising pretence that his story might have, since Alice does not learn anything from the trip she takes or from the mad characters she encounters. In his preface to *Sylvie and Bruno* quoted in Jackson (2002: 35), Lewis Carroll identifies three different types of mental states, which are related to the three modes: mimetic, fantastic and marvellous. The first condition Carroll terms "ordinary," the second is "eerie" and the third is "trance-like."

[1] Tout ce qui se passe, se passe dans le language et se passe par le language.

In a normal state of mind, humans see a real world; in an eerie state they see a transitional world. These three categories correspond to mimetic, fantastic and marvellous literary forms. Fairy tales occupy the boundary between the real and the imaginary shifting the relations between them through their indeterminacy. *Alice* books go beyond the "eerie" state; almost reaching the so-called "trance-like" state that rejects any connection with reality.

Metamorphosis, as I have already mentioned, plays an important part in fairy tales. People transformed into animals, princes into frogs, magical shifts of shape, size or colour, have constituted one of the main pleasures of the fairy tale mode. Nevertheless, even that important element - metamorphosis, which usually activates fairy tale schemata, is here distorted. In allegories or fairy-tales metamorphosis always plays a teleological function; there is always a reason behind any transformation (Jackson 2002: 81). In most cases it serves as a metaphor and it is almost always redemptive.

Lewis Carroll is considered one of the first writers of fantastic stories to change this perspective on metamorphosis. Beginning with Alice's repeated shifts of size, metamorphosis has started to become meaningless and progressively, independent of the will or desire of the subject (Jackson 2002: 81). Physical transformation like in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* simply happens and it is no longer redemptive or metaphorical.

Another important aspect that comes to deconstruct a fairy tale schema is the problem of identity. The characters of fairy tales often change their physical appearance but, although transformed into animals, plants, they never lose their identity or even question it. The transformation Alice suffers does not alter her self - she remains the same sensible, good-mannered little girl to the end, but still the problem of identity troubles her.

> But if I'm not the same, the next question is: who in the world am I? Ah, *that's* the great puzzle. (Carroll 1993: 14)

> What do you mean by that? Said the Caterpillar sternly explain yourself!
> I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, sir, said Alice, because I'm not myself, you see. (Carroll 1993:31).

This inclination towards the self becomes one of the reasons why *Alice* books have been considered to make a transition between the fantastic and marvellous mode typical for the modem fiction e.g. Borges, Kafka.

Nonsense Literature Schema

Even though at the beginning of *Alice* books the elements I have described so far suggest a fairy tale schema, this perspective changes radically as we come to know better the world of Alice adventures, a world governed by ambiguity or even more, marked by nonsense. The fantastic pushes towards an area of non-signification, thus the nonsense schema is activated and sustained by the absurd of the situations described in *Alice* books and especially by the playful use of language.

> "Mine is a long *tale*\" said the Mouse, turning to Alice and sighing.
> "It's a long *tail*, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" (Carroll 1993: 21)

The characters themselves seem to be aware of the nonsensical world they are living in; they constantly repeat the word "nonsense" or "lack of meaning": "What *nonsense* we are talking!" (Carroll 1993: 74), "What do you suppose is the use of a child *without meaning!"* (Carroll 1993: 161, my emphasis). Lewis Carroll's primary concern seems to be language. He draws attention to problems of signification, presenting a confused, chaotic world which gives up the pretence to represent absolute meaning or reality. According to Jackson (2002: 141), when Alice walks through the mirror and falls down the rabbit hole, she enters the space of non-signification in which her acquired language system ceases to be of any help. Words have no control over things or objects: a baby becomes a pig, a grin becomes a cat and words begin to have a life of their own. No word has a meaning inseparably attached to it. For Carroll as for Wittgenstein, language is the means of constructing meaning - outside the language world, there lies only nonsense (Jackson 2002: 142).

The nonsense schema is activated by that strange semiotic excess where signs are deprived of significance. As I have already observed, in Lewis Carroll's case words have started to lose their seemingly inseparable sense. Thus, Alice is faced with a non-referential world, a strange realm in which proper names have to mean something, while the common names seem to have no fixed meaning attached to them. In Wonderland "there are no ends, only signs which lead nowhere, landscapes which are labyrinths without a centre" (Jackson 2002: 142).

> She found herself in a long, low hall [...] There were doors, all around the hall, but they were all locked. (Carroll 1993: 10)

> She was wandering up and down, and trying turn after turn but always coming back. (Carroll 1993:98)

It is very important to make a distinction between nonsense and the absurd literature. Jackson (2002: 144) paraphrasing Sewell and Prickett claims that:

> nonsense engages the force towards disorder in continual play. It tends to re-combine different semantic units which remain distinct from one another. It fractures rather than dissolves, returning to rigidity and the separation of individual units. Far from being "free" or formless, it [nonsense] is the most highly organised and the most rigidly controlled of all forms of fantasy. It is a fantasy of extreme logic, of rationality pushed to its limits.

The impression of a meaningless world deprived of any logic is, in fact, a result of the overuse of logic which is constantly abused and pushed to its extremes. But in the literature of the absurd the world as we know it is no longer controlled; logic or other form of rationality has no power over it.

The Theatre of the Absurd Schema

In the hierarchical order the absurd follows nonsense. In fact, it is considered that the genre of the absurd stems from nonsense literature. In other words, we cannot say that the activation of absurd literature schema implies the breaking of the nonsense schema; on the contrary, the construction of the former is a result of a continuous adding of the latter, thus we are dealing with schema adding. This is the reason why so many critics consider Lewis Carroll the forerunner of the theatre of the absurd. The schema specific to the theatre of the absurd is activated by the technique generally known as the dissolution of discourse usually caused by the breaking up of any predictable or reliable relation between the signifier and the signified or between the message intended and what the receiver of the message understands. The dissolution of discourse translates itself into lack of meaning and lack of communication.

In Beckett's or Ionesco's plays the characters are engaged in long conversations, all signifying nothing, leading nowhere. In *Alice* books conversation is almost as barren as in the theatre of the absurd. Furthermore, each character is obsessed with only one topic of conversation. The Mad Hatter is obsessed with time and tea, the Queen of Hearts with cutting off heads, the Duchess with finding morals in everything. Their strange stubbornness in choosing the same topic of conversation makes Alice exclaim: "How can you talk to a person if he always says the same thing?" (Carroll 1993: 49). In this way, they

become hermetically isolated in a self-centred discourse. But their obsession with certain subjects of conversation is not the only one responsible for their failure in communicating. To this we may add the misinterpretation of idioms, of homophones, of homographs, etc.

The lack of communication and the dissolution of discourse are also due to the characters' original use of language to signify whatever they would like to. Humpty Dumpty claims the greatest freedom to give any meaning to any word (Sutherland 1970: 149). With Humpty Dumpty's stipulative definitions of words chaos begins and communication cannot be established any longer. The discourse becomes one without an object - empty talking.

The Surrealist Literature Schema

The dream theme presented in *Alice* books influences and alters the discourse. As a consequence, we activate the surrealist schema sustained by numerous elements, also found in the surrealist writings. The specific atmosphere of dreams surpasses the chaotic world of the literature of the absurd; reality is turned upside down and another one is constructed. Surrealist schema springs out from the theatre of the absurd to which we add a few more elements. Therefore, we are dealing again with schema adding.

The first surrealist elements or themes which activate this schema are: the disintegration of objects, as in the Sheep's shop, and the fluidity of forms as in "the glass was beginning to melt away, just like bright silvery mist" (Carroll 1993: 87). Other similarities between *Alice* books and the surrealistic writings are best understood in terms of narrative structure and of the relation between text and reader. Both are much closer to a marvellous mode, as described by Lewis Carroll himself, in which the narrator or the characters are rarely in a position of uncertainty. Even Alice eventually gets used to that anarchic world: "this seemed quite natural to me" (Carroll 1993: 23).

As I have already mentioned, surrealism is closer to the marvellous - it is super-real and its etymology implies that it is presenting a world above this one rather than fracturing it from inside (Jackson 2002: 36). Lewis Carroll proposes another reality not related to the actual one. *Alice* books become non-referential texts not only through the language used, but also through the situation described.

The discourse of the marvellous, the characteristic discourse of oneiric literature, is best described by Novalis as "narrative without coherence but rather with associations like dreams [...] full of words, but without any meaning and

coherence [...] like fragments" (qtd. in Jackson 2002: 145). The theme of free associations based on Freud's theories of the subconscious can also be traced in *Alice* books, especially in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Free associations are best described as chain reactions induced by oneiric, fabulous discourse, or as fluid passing from one scene to another.

Chapter 5, "Wool and Water" in *Through the Looking-Glass* is the best example of oneiric discourse based on free associations. The White Queen with whom Alice is having a conversation turns slowly into a sheep and the landscape changes gradually into a shop and then the shop into a river. In this passage we are not dealing with metamorphoses like in fairy tales but rather with that oneiric sensation that the objects around have lost all consistency and can take any form. Another illustrative example is offered by Chapter 3, "Looking-Glass Insects," where Alice suddenly finds herself on a train talking to the Guard, and in the next moment under a tree.

> In another moment she felt the carriage rise straight up into the air, and in her fright she caught at the thing nearest to her hand, which happened to be the Goat's beard. But the beard seemed to melt away as she touched it, and she found herself sitting quietly under a tree. (Carroll 1993: 106)

Absurd conversation pertaining to the theatre of the absurd is also characteristic for surrealistic writing, but here its absurdity is pushed to its limits. The extreme rationality characteristic to nonsense is now completely lost.

> "Tickets, please!" said the Guard, putting his head in at the window. In a moment everybody was holding out a ticket [...]
> "Now then show your ticket, child!" the Guard went on, looking angrily at Alice. And a great many voices all sat together ("like the chorus of a song," thought Alice). "Don't keep him waiting, child! Why, his time is worth a thousand pounds a minute!"
> "I'm afraid I haven't got one", Alice said in a frightened tone: "there wasn't a ticket-office where I came from." And again the chorus of voices went on. "There wasn't room for one where she came from. The land there is worth a thousand pounds an inch." (Carroll 1993: 104)

Moving without advancing, the impression of immobility while trying to walk, running fast but arriving nowhere, the continuous fluid change of objects and of the landscape which devours itself creating new forms, all are elements prompting a surrealistic story schema. The last two pages of Chapter 9, "Queen Alice" offer a perfect example of a surrealistic piece of writing. The characters

change into monsters behaving in a grotesque manner, the objects dissolve and take other forms, strange associations produce fabulous forms and inanimate objects begin to have a life of their own.

> As to the bottles, they each took a pair of plates, which they hastily fitted on as wings, and so, with forks for legs, went fluttering about in all directions. [...]
> And all the guests began drinking it directly, and very queerly they managed it: some of them put their glasses upon their heads like extinguishers, and drank all that trickled down their faces [...] (Carroll 1993: 170)

The discourse is anarchic, deviant, and meaningless. It combines units in new relations and presents discrete elements which are juxtaposed and then re-assembled in unexpected, apparently impossible combinations. Sometimes the discourse becomes tautological. The words themselves are not ambiguous; it is the intricate syntax which renders the statement impossible to understand.

> "I quite agree with you," said the Duchess; "and the moral of that is - Be what you would seem to be - Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that want you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise."
> "I think I should understand that better," Alice said very politely, "if I had it written down: but I can't quite follow it as you say it." (Carroll 1993: 60)

If nonsense literature is characterised by an extreme logic which gives a false impression of disorder, the literature or the absurd begins to lose it, while the surrealism is completely deprived of any logic and rationality. I have emphasised once again the differences between the three levels of discourse to demonstrate that we arrive at a surrealistic story schema through a continuous adding in schemata.

The Metafiction Schema

The four schemata prompted by a slight change in discourse are all interrelated, they are all constructed starting from an alternative reality different from the actual one. The next schema is by far the most original, having also a defamiliarising effect on the reader. One would not expect to find in a book initially written for children so many metafictional elements. *Alice* books, especially *Through the Looking-Glass*, can also be considered books about language, about writing fiction. Michael Charles (qtd. in Cristofovici 1991: 67) defines metafiction as the deliberate interaction between discourse and metadiscourse.

One of the main principles of metafiction, which also prompts the metafiction schemata is the infinite regression. Wittgenstein (qtd. in Cristofovici 1991: 68) defined language as "a type of infinite regression of words spoken by other words." A passage taken from *Through the Looking-Glass* illustrates Carroll's awareness of the way in which language can be used to talk about language. The White Knight wishes to sing for Alice a song whose tune is his own invention.

> The name of the song is called *"Haddocks ' Eyes*
> Oh, that's the name of the song, is it? Alice said, trying to feel interested.
> No, you don't understand, the Knight said, looking a little vexed. That's what the name is *called.* The name really is *"The Aged Aged Man*
> Then I ought to have said "that's what the song is called." Alice corrected herself.
> No, you oughtn't: that's quite another thing! The *song* is called *"Ways and Means "* but that's only what it's *called,* you know!
> Well, what is the *song,* then? [...]
> I was coming to that, the Knight said. The song really is *"A-sitting On A Gate."*
>
> (Carroll 1993: 155, original emphasis)

Carroll shows here that verbal symbols may be used to refer to other verbal symbols. This is the infinite regression I have referred to so far. Alice is confused because she does not realise what the Knight is doing when he states one linguistic expression to be the call-name of another (Sutherland 1970: 119). Carroll makes a distinction between the thing, the name of the thing and the name of the name of the thing. Nagel (qtd. in Sutherland 1970: 119) discusses this passage in his treatment of call names and he considers Alice's difficulty to be "the type of misunderstanding that may arise from the failure to distinguish between fragments of discourse (such as names) and what linguistic expressions are about to designate."

Furthermore, we can equate the written text of *Through the Looking-Glass* with the mirror through which Alice passes into the other world (Cristofovici 1991: 65). Considering this equivalence between text and mirror we can claim that the commentary about the text is inserted in the text itself. What is most interesting is that the White King - the character who makes the comment about the metalinguistic characteristics of discourse - is the author himself as Tenniel portrayed him in the original edition of the *Alice* books. The author inserts himself in the text in an almost postmodernist manner, and becomes a character who helps Alice finish her journey. He obviously mocks the distant, neutral, all knowing, omniscient narrator who appears in fairy tales.

The authorial voice which does not know more than his characters, simulating a position similar to that of the reader, makes itself heard again in the dialogue between Alice and Humpty Dumpty: "Alice didn't venture to ask what he paid them with; and so you see I can't tell you!" (Carroll 1993: 132).

The infinite regression is similarly present in Alice's dream and the King's dream functioning again as a signal within the text, thus commenting upon its fictional quality. Carroll multiplies the theme of the dream within the dream, which reminds us of Borges's characters conscious of the fictional quality of the world they inhabit and of the fact that they are fictional products. The unreality of the characters, their fictional nature is made obvious in Chapter 4, "Tweedledum and Tweedledee" when the twins claim that Alice is just a fictional character.

> "He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee: "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"
> Alice said: "Nobody can guess that."
> "Why, about you!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"
> "Where I am now, of course," said Alice.
> "Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!" (Carroll 1993: 117)

What is most innovative is that Lewis Carroll creates a character that has a double status. First, Alice is a fictional character taking part in the adventures described. Secondly, she is a character who belongs to a discursive universe which she continuously tries to understand and decipher, a status resembling that of the reader. Thus, the text becomes a huge puzzle which needs to be rearranged and whose meaning has to be interpreted. This explains the satisfaction the reader experiences when deciphering a pun or a misused homonym. Not surprisingly, the structure of *Through the Looking-Glass* follows that of a game of chess. Martin Gardner (qtd. in Cristofovici 1991: 65) demonstrates that the text is, in fact, an extended game of chess and each movement Alice makes on the chessboard is according to the rules of the game.

Furthermore, Lewis Carroll parodies the referential level of interpreting literally phrases and idioms, by inventing words, deprived of referentiality. The well-known poem "Jabberwocky" also feigns the construction of a text which gives only the illusion of meaning. The dialogue with Humpty-Dumpty parodies its interpretation.

The structure of the two books is concentric: the book within a book (the looking glass book Alice finds in the other room), the dream within a dream,

the story within a story. The story, as it is, is framed by two poems, so we have two types of discourse: the narrative discourse and the poetical one. In fact, all the poems inserted in the story are meant to explain and mirror the narrated happenings; they, in a way, announce what will happen next. This is the case of the famous limericks about Humpty Dumpty and Tweedledee and Tweedledum. Furthermore, the two books contain famous pieces of writing by Wordsworth and Hood, magnificently parodied by Carroll. "Resolution and Independence" was burlesqued in the "Aged Aged Man," and the schoolmaster-murderer's kind attitude towards his pupils in "Dream of Eugene Aram" was mocked in the "Walrus and Carpenter."

In this paper, I have tried to approach *Alice* books from the perspective of text schemata. This analysis enabled me to understand how Carroll's writings were able to give rise to so many interpretations. It was very interesting to see how many different types of discourse could be found in a book which, initially was meant for children and how much of the ambiguity present in the text is caused by the skilful interplay between the various schemata described above.

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"Going over to Rome": The Changing Attitudes towards Roman Catholicism in Disraeli's *Sybil* and *Lothair*

In 1850 Disraeli wrote in a letter to a lady friend, "[h]ere [London] we have only two subjects, and both gloomy ones - Religion and Rents" (qtd. in Davis 1976: 103). In the Victorian age, the age of great religious revival, the influence of religion was extensive and included far more than just ecclesiastical matters. Religion was inextricably intertwined with politics and religious questions were the cause of the downfall of many a government; they also inspired writers ranging from mere hacks to the ones that are now widely considered to be canonical. One of the questions reappearing in the public discourse was the role of Roman Catholicism in England, still perceived by many as dangerous for English identity. The aim of this paper is to compare the attitudes of Disraeli towards Roman Catholicism, concentrating on his two novels: *Sybil* (1845) and *Lothair* (1870), and to explain the apparent radical change of Disraeli's views: in his earlier novels he seemed to be mostly sympathetic towards Catholicism while in *Lothair* he presented it as a threat to English society.

Disraeli's attitudes toward Roman Catholicism are coloured by his own religious identity. As is generally known, he was Jewish, baptized in the Church of England at the age of thirteen, apparently for purely pragmatic reasons; his father, who to all accounts seemed to be an agnostic in the mould of Enlightenment philosophers, made this decision in order to facilitate his children's future careers. Benjamin Disraeli, however, "never forgot nor let willingly others forget" his ethnic origins (Frietzsche 1961: 8). He made his Jewishness the cornerstone of his conservatism and had his omniscient and omnipotent Jewish character Sidonia in *Coningsby* (1844) argue that Jews are somehow bom Tories, always in defence of the established institutions (Disraeli 1904: 302-303). Political conservatism also informed other fascinations of Disraeli: his admiration for the Middle Ages and his sympathetic attitude towards Catholicism. Indeed, in some novels, such as *Sybil*, Catholicism and medievalism seem to be inseparable. Catholics in Disraeli's novels are often presented as living

remnants of the past ages, long gone, but perceived as superior to the age of rapacious capitalism.

Pro-Catholic sympathies of the Tory Disraeli were by no means obvious nor common at the time of writing *Sybil',* anti-Catholicism in England had been a long-established tradition. In fact, it was one of the cornerstones of British identity, providing a link between different nations and different classes that inhabited Great Britain. The popular vision of English history was construed as a series of fortuitous events from the Reformation on, when the hand of God intervened over and over again to deliver England from Popery (the victory over the Spanish Armada, the Gun-Powder Plot, the Glorious Revolution and so on). However, in the late eighteenth century the danger of any real political intervention from the Pope or any of his subjects faded; Stuart pretenders had been vanquished, the Papal State established civil diplomatic relations with Britain and the British government tried to work out a mode of peaceful cohabitation with the growing numbers of its Catholic citizens, not only within Britain but also in the colonies, for instance in Quebec. A number of bills were passed, gradually relaxing the penal laws in Britain, and culminating with the Catholic Relief Act of 1829. However, the removal of anti-Catholic laws did not mean automatically the end of prejudice, but, conversely, the relaxation of the penal laws and the ensuing expansion of the Catholic Church served to fuel the suspicions of the Protestant majority all the more (Amstein 1982: 3). It is a telling fact that several influential societies for propagating Protestantism, such as the British Reformation Society and the Protestant Association, were founded in the years immediately before or after the Catholic Emancipation (Paz 1992: 33-34).

Within this political and social context, the distinctly pro-Catholic sympathies of Disraeli in the novels written in the first half of his life are all the more striking. Catholics appear in *The Young Duke* (1831), *Contarini Fleming* (1832) and *Sybil* (1845), always presented as sympathetic figures. This is even more remarkable, taking into account the fact that Disraeli's own Tory party harboured some ultra-conservative members with decidedly anti-Catholic views. *Sybil* perhaps offers the clearest explanation of Disraeli's sympathies towards Catholicism in Book I, where Disraeli presents his Tory vision of history, which is the polar opposite of the Whig vision of history. Ostensibly delineating the family history of the main character Lord Egremont, he condemns all the events celebrated by Protestant Whigs as stages on the way of Britain towards parliamentarian democracy. The Reformation is presented as tantamount to the spoliation of monasteries, through which the family of Egremont gained

their riches, and the Glorious Revolution as an act of treason towards the lawful king, whom Disraeli exonerates from the charges of attempting to make England Catholic again: “That the last of Stuarts had any other object in his impolitic manoeuvres than an impracticable scheme to blend the two Churches, there is now authority to disbelieve” (Disraeli 1981:21). The de-glorification of the Glorious Revolution is combined with the adulation of Charles I: “Rightly was King Charles sumamed the Martyr, for he was the holocaust of direct taxation. Never yet did man lay down his heroic life for so great a cause: the cause of the Church and the cause of the Poor” (Disraeli 1981: 230). This hero-worship of the Stuarts seems to evoke the faint echoes of Defoe’s rant in his pamphlet “The shortest way with the Dissenters:” “You have Butcher’d one King, Depos’d another King, and made a mock King of a Third” (Defoe 1974: 116-17), except, of course, for the fact that Defoe was ironic, while Disraeli at least purported to speak seriously.

As we can see from the above, the first reason for Disraeli’s criticism of the Whig vision of history runs more or less along the lines of Dr Johnson’s observation, “the prejudice of the Tory is for establishment; the prejudice of the Whig is for innovation” (Boswell 1961: 1155); the main sin of the Whigs is that they ruin the established institutions and, as he shows in another part of *Sybil*, provide nothing in their place. This argument is illustrated in Book 2, where Egremont has a dispute with two men (who later turn out to be Chartists) in the ruins of an abbey, now belonging to his family. In the dispute Walter Gerrard, a Catholic and father to the heroine of the title, paints an idyllic vision of the Middle Ages as the time of contented peasants ruled by benevolent lords abbots, the happy era brutally terminated by the Reformation. The description that Disraeli puts in Gerrard’s mouth goes against the well-rooted Protestant mistrust of monastic life, and Gerrard easily overthrows all traditional arguments against monks put forward by Egremont:

> “[...] their history has been written by their enemies; they were condemned without a hearing; the people rose oftentimes in their behalf; and their property was divided with those on whose reports it was forfeited.”
> “At any rate, it was a forfeiture which gave life to the community,” said Egremont; “the lands are held by active men and not by drones.”
> “A drone is one who does not labour,” said the stranger; “whether he wear a cowl or a coronet, ’tis the same to me. All agree the Monastics were easy landlords; their rents were low; they granted leases in those days.”
> “And do you really think they were easier landlords than our present ones?” said Egremont, inquiringly.

> "Human nature would tell us that, even if history did not confess it. [...] The monks were in short in every district a point of refuge for all who needed succour, counsel, and protection; a body of individuals having no cares of their own, with wisdom to guide the inexperienced, with wealth to relieve the suffering, and often with power to protect the oppressed."
> "You plead their cause with feeling," said Egremont, not unmoved.
> "It is my own; they were the sons of the People, like myself."
> "I had thought rather these monasteries were the resort of the younger branches of the aristocracy?" said Egremont.
> "Instead of the pension list;" replied his companion, smiling, but not with bitterness. "Well, if we must have an aristocracy, I would sooner that its younger branches should be monks and nuns [...] but the list of the mitred abbots when they were suppressed, shows that the great majority of the heads of houses were of the people."
> (Disraeli 1981: 61-62)

The defence of Catholicism is carried on further by Aubrey St Lys, a clergyman who, though Anglican himself, defends the Catholic Church on the grounds that it "is to be respected as the only Hebraeo-Christian church extant; all other churches established by the Hebrew apostles have disappeared, but Rome remains" (Disraeli 1981: 111). Therefore, the respect that St Lys pays to Rome is purely on the grounds of its being immediate successor to Judaism, just like the New Testament is "only a supplement" (Disraeli 1981: 112) to the Old Testament. The respect for Judaism and Jews as the font of Christianity was one of favourite topics of Disraeli, to which he returned over and over again, both in literature and politics, for instance when he spoke for Jewish emancipation. It might be argued, then, that for Disraeli Catholicism was Jewishness in disguise, and when he wrote in defence of one minority, he really thought about the other (O'Kell 1987: 221).[1]

This argument is even stronger when we look at his earlier novels such as *Contarini Fleming.* The title character is a black-haired, swarthy son of Italian mother and English father, who feels no affinity between himself and his pure-English blonde step-siblings: "[tjhere was no similitude between us. Their blue eyes, their flaxen hair and their white visages claimed no kindred with my Venetian countenance. Wherever I moved, I looked around and found a race different from myself' (Disraeli 1832: 6). Contarini finally finds peace

[1] Interestingly enough, Protestant polemicists viewed the relationship between Catholicism and Protestantism in analogous terms to those in which Catholics viewed the relationship between Judaism and Catholicism: Protestants had to leave the Church of Rome behind just like early Christians had to leave Judaism (Griffin 2004: 5).

of mind when as an adult he goes back to his Italian roots and converts to Catholicism. It has been argued that the feeling of being an oddball expressed by Fleming is a clearly autobiographical element for Disraeli, who with his "Venetian countenance" may very well have felt the same in the English school playground (Davis 1976: 5).

The praises of monasticism are consistent with the ideology of Young England movement, a small coterie of young liberal Tories centred around Disraeli. As Disraeli himself observed in the General Preface to the collected edition of his novels published twenty five years later, Young England sought to achieve in politics what the Oxford Movement tried to achieve in religion: to revive old practices and customs, make the church a vital presence in society again, reawaken social responsibility among the possessing classes. In *Sybil* social responsibility is embodied by Mr Trafford, a Catholic and a socially responsible factory owner, who provides his workers with safe and healthy work conditions, public baths and schools. "In the midst of the village, surrounded by beautiful gardens [...] was the house of Trafford himself, who comprehended his position too well to withdraw himself with vulgar exclusiveness from his real dependents, but recognised the baronial principle, reviving in a new form, and adapted to the softer manners and more ingenious circumstances of the times" (Disraeli 1981: 182). As we can see, Mr Trafford is basically the industrial version of the good feudal lord. His adherence to the "old" religion emphasizes the link between his exemplary mill and Old Merry England that Young England tried to bring back to life.

Sybil was the penultimate novel of Disraeli before the long break of twenty-three years which he devoted solely to his political career. He returned to the novelistic career with *Lothair* (1870) after his first brief stint as the Prime Minister. The book was very successful commercially, perhaps the most successful of all Disraeli's novels, although it certainly owed at least some of its success to the curiosity of the public about a novel written by an ex-Prime Minister. In *Lothair* Catholicism plays a much larger role than in any of Disraeli's earlier novels because the whole novel represents a *psychomachia* for the soul of the eponymous character, where the contestants are Anglicanism, Catholicism and Revolution, all of them represented in an allegorical manner by beautiful women.

The direct inspiration for the novel was the conversion of the young Marquess of Bute to Catholicism, which caused much stir in English society (Amstein 1982: 131-32). Like Bute, Lothair is a young aristocrat who lost both his parents at an early age and was left under the care of two guardians, one of them a Scottish Presbyterian, the other an Anglican priest who later

converts to Catholicism and embarks on a rapid career advancing to the rank of Cardinal. At the start of the novel Lothair is about to come of age and has to decide what to do with his life and his immense wealth. He is a Candide-like character, believing almost everything he is told; he is also a bit like Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*, since all the women he encounters are portrayed as immensely attractive. He wants to marry the first woman he comes across, that is Lady Corisande, the sister of his school friend, but her mother sensibly rejects the proposal. Then he becomes acquainted with the Catholic family of St Jeromes and in order to please the beautiful niece of Lady St Jerome, Clare Arundel, he starts to take part in Catholic masses with gentle encouragement of Cardinal Grandison, his former guardian. Finally he falls in love with Theodora, an Italian patriot fighting for the unity of her country and joins her in the campaign against the Papal State. Theodora, wounded in a battle, asks Lothair on her death-bed to promise that he will never become a Catholic. Lothair himself is soon wounded and saved by Clare, who is at that time in Rome with St Jeromes. In Roman society Lothair's deliverance is widely believed to be miraculous, and rumours are spread that he is going to convert to Catholicism. Disgusted with this intrigue and spurred on by the vision of Theodora's ghost, Lothair manages to sneak away and travels to the Holy Land, from which he returns spiritually regenerated and, since Clare decided to take the veil, proposes finally to Corisande and is accepted. As we can see, the romantic entanglements of Lothair follow a neat pattern: from Corisande, to Clare, to Theodora and via Clare to Corisande again (Flavin 2005: 159).

There are some elements that *Lothair* and *Sybil* have in common, among them the admiration for the idealized vision of the Middle Ages. What sets Lothair off on his spiritual-cum-romantic quest is his dissatisfaction with the present times. "Lothair's plea 'I wish I had been bom in the Middle Ages' is, in essence, a familiar refrain from a Disraelian hero" (Flavin 2005: 155). In spite of his distrust of Catholicism, Disraeli also retains his fascination with Catholic art, ritual and ceremony; in fact, in *Lothair* it is even more visible than in *Sybil.*

> The acolytes and the thurifers fell into their places; there seemed no end of banners and large golden crosses; great was the company of the prelates [...] a long purple line, some only in cassocks, some in robes, and mitred; then came a new banner of the Blessed Virgin, which excited intense interest, and every eye was strained to catch the pictured scene. After this banner, amid frequent incense, walked two of the most beautiful children in Rome, dressed as angels with golden wings; the boy bearing a rose of Jericho, the girl a lily. After these, as was understood, dressed in black and veiled, walked six ladies, who were said to be daughters of the noblest

houses of England, and then a single form with a veil touching the ground.
(Disraeli 1870: 2. 133-34)

However, the whole ceremony, which Lothair attends out of politeness to his hosts, turns out to be a ruse set up by the Catholic Church to lure Lothair into its fold. The description of this attempt at spiritual seduction uses all the staple motifs of cautionary tales of Victorian popular literature: attractive Catholic members of the opposite sex serving as bait, priests who never walk but only “glide,” the deceptive beauty of art and ritual. The only difference is that the main character is a man since in anti-Catholic novels of the time it was mostly women who were in danger of being converted or, even worse, lured into a convent[2].

The first reason for Disraeli’s change of heart towards Catholicism might be the fact that in writing *Lothair* he wanted to settle an old score with Cardinal Manning, who in his opinion had stabbed him in the back by supporting the Liberals during the dispute on the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and thereby contributed to the quick end of his first government. We must not forget that Disraeli was a politician who happened to write novels, and for the most part he used them as speaking platforms to air his views on various political and social issues. Apart from expressing noble sentiments about the condition of England, Disraeli also sometimes used fiction in a somewhat less noble manner to “vent his spleen on political enemies” (Frietzsche 1961: 41). Describing Cardinal Grandison, Lothair’s ex-guardian and the *spiritus movens* in the scheme of converting his former charge to Catholicism, Disraeli slips comfortably into all the old clichés of anti-Papist literature, which were actually becoming unfashionable in the 1870s but still could serve his purpose. He presents an Anglican convert very much like Manning: a smooth-tongued, devious character, endearing to everyone he meets and loyal only to the Pope. However, Disraeli apparently got over his disappointment with Manning’s “betrayal,” since a few years later he was able to present a fairer portrait of the cardinal in *Endymion* (1880) (Frietzsche 1961: 42). Another proof that Disraeli did not harbour old grudges, at least not enough to impede his social life, was that two years after publishing *Lothair* he was one of the official witnesses at the wedding of Marquess Bute, officiated by Cardinal Manning (Griffin 2004: 186).

Apart from personal disappointments, there were also larger issues at stake. In the period between *Sybil* and *Lothair* the number of converts to Catholicism

[2] For the use of this plot, see Frances Trollope, *Father Eustace: A Tale of the Jesuits* (1847) and Catherine Sinclair, *Beatrice, or The Unknown Relatives* (1852).

increased and "in the minds of many Englishmen became a flood" (Amstein 1982: 40- 41). The interestingly oppressed and slightly exotic minority became a strong and militant force, not only because of high-profile conversions but also because of the immigration of several hundred thousand Irishmen. However, Disraeli focuses on upper-class converts. As he perceives aristocracy as "the natural leaders," he sees their conversions as the acts of defection. "When I hear of young nobles, the natural leaders of the land, going over to the Roman Catholic Church, 1 confess I lose heart and patience. It seems so unpatriotic, so effeminate," says Lady Corisande (Disraeli 1870: 1. 69). Indeed, the Catholics portrayed in the most satirical way are the "new" Catholics, converts such as Cardinal Grandison and Lady St Jerome. Lord St Jerome is an "old Catholic" and a real English gentleman, opposing the devious machinations of Cardinal Grandison.

Even though Disraeli praises Catholicism in *Sybil* and criticizes it in *Lothair,* he basically remains faithful to his "prejudice of establishment:" the "old" Catholics are praiseworthy for their adherence to their faith, the "new" show their lack of purpose by allowing themselves to be sucked in by the whirlpool of Rome if they do not show enough firmness of mind. He writes reproachfully about the new English converts in Rome: "all the beautiful young countesses who had 'gone over' to Rome, and all the spirited young earls who had come over to bring their wives back, but had unfortunately remained themselves" (Disraeli 1870: 2. 160). Moreover, in *Sybil* the Catholic Church practically does not appear in its institutional form, apart from the convent where Sybil lived and was educated by the kindly Mother Ursula. In *Lothair,* on the other hand, the Catholic Church on the threshold of the First Vatican Council, which was to pronounce the dogma on papal infallibility, is a vast organization, becoming ready to take over the globe:

> And first of all Lothair was presented to the cardinal-prefect of the Propaganda, who presides over the ecclesiastical affairs of every country in which the Roman Church has a mission, and that includes every land between the Arctic and the Southern Pole. This glimpse of the organized correspondence with both the Americas, all Asia, all Africa, all Australia, and many European countries, carried on by a countless staff of clerks in one of the most capacious buildings in the world, was calculated to impress the visitor with a due idea of the extensive authority of the Roman Pontiff. (Disraeli 1870: 2. 123-24)

This vision of the Roman Catholic Church as an efficient and menacing bureaucratic machine stands in stark contrast with the quoted earlier romanticised

image of the English medieval church in *Sybil,* romanticised because belonging safely to the past. After all, the dispute on monasticism between Egremont and Gerrard takes place in the *ruins* of Mowbray Abbey while Gerrard's daughter, the eponymous heroine, has removed herself in order to sing an evening hymn to the Virgin. In *Sybil* we have a lone figure of a lovely young woman occupied with pleasantly mysterious and picturesque rituals in a long defunct church; in *Lothair* we face a powerful international organization. It could be inferred that Catholicism for Disraeli was more of a convenient symbolic shortcut, a wormhole to his idealized vision of the Middle Ages. The moment when it started to function as a real organized religion in the contemporary world, it stopped being a sentimental reminder of the past and became a living, greedy and rapacious organization.

The difference between attitudes towards Catholicism in *Sybil* and *Lothair* seems, then, to have its roots in the difference between Catholicism as the symbolic entity and the Roman Catholic Church as an actual contemporary institution. In *Sybil* the vision of Catholicism is highly romanticised, and it seems mostly to be a picturesque relic, just like the ruins of the abbey are. In *Lothair* the Catholic Church is a very real and powerful institution, endangering what was closest to Disraeli's conservative heart: the established English institutions, including the Church of England. This change in Disraeli's mindset might be read as an ironic twist provided by history along the lines of "beware of dreams, they may come true." Disraeli saw the "old religion," which he praised from a safe historical distance, coming back to life in his own country, and he recoiled with horror. *Lothair* might be seen as Disraeli's coming to the conclusion that it is best to leave monasteries in ruins.

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PART III

Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century British Literature

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The Artist versus Commodity Culture: Wyndham Lewis and the Dilemmas of Bourgeois-Bohemianism

Modernist culture is often associated with an exalted view of the artist as the aloof aesthete "paring his fingernails" while the contemptible philistine engages in the pursuit of material goods. The focus of this paper is the career of a modernist whose aloofness was notorious but who, nevertheless, sought to undermine the notion of art as something antithetical to marketplace values. Apart from marketing his own artistic ventures, he captured in his work the ambivalent position of the artist faced with the realities of capitalist economy. He also ridiculed the intellectual pose of many of his contemporaries, supposedly opposed to commodity culture but failing to practice what they preached. Where other modernists saw opposition, Lewis spotted complementarity, or at least, ambiguity. The term "bourgeois-bohemianism," which he coined to describe a mixture of subversive pretence and middle-class calculativeness, conflated two attitudes which had traditionally been perceived as mutually exclusive.

The meaning of the word "artist" seems to trouble Lewis. It is a persistent theme in his creations, however if any definitions are provided, they are given in the negative. As Alan Munton (1998: 17) observes, "Lewis's fictions delineate the social circumstances that support the bad artist and the bad idea." The subject of pseudo-art is treated extensively in *Tarr* and *The Apes of God*, and keeps recurring in other texts, both fictional and critical ones. Unlike many canonical modernist works which celebrate the artist hero, Lewis's writings seem to place emphasis on the decline of forceful individuality and its failure to shape the life around it. There is not much hope for the artist's resistance to the trends of modem society: mediocrity triumphs over a superior mind, if such a thing as a superior mind exists at all.

Lewis's pessimistic reflection upon the artist's status in the modem world originally stemmed from his experience of living in Montparnasse in the first decade of the twentieth century. There, in the bohemian quarter of Paris, he met an array of artists and intellectuals, some genuine but also many sham ones

- people he would call “art parasites” and intellectual frauds. Often short of money, he also developed an acute awareness of the forces which weigh upon the artist in a free market economy. We find those aspects of Lewis’s Parisian adventure transposed in the novel *Tarr*, whose initial title was *Bourgeois-Bohemians*, later dismissed by the author as perhaps too straightforward.

In *Tarr*, Lewis subjects the myth of artistic Bohemia to critique by ruthlessly unmasking cultural affectation and intellectual fakery. What interests Lewis is the collapse of the binary opposition between the bohemian and the philistine: he shows how the boundaries between the two become blurred, and links this phenomenon to the advent of commodity culture. The portrayal of bourgeois-bohemianism in *Tarr* is set against the background of the aggressively expanding metropolis, where people and places are swept by “the victorious flood of commerce” (Lewis 1996: 97) and where superior and elitist qualities give way to mass appetites and unrestrained acquisitiveness. There is a memorable passage in the novel describing the Restaurant Lejeune which used to be “a clean, tranquil little creamery” but became transformed by the forces of the market into a “a broiling, luridly lighted, roaring den, inhabited by a rushing and howling band of slatternly savages” (Lewis 1996: 97). The artistic circles of Paris undergo a similar transformation, as if the giant organism of the city conditioned the lives of its inhabitants. In such an oppressive and competitive environment, artists and intellectuals find themselves tom by conflicting desires: on the one hand, they would like to cling to their non-conformist ideal, and, on the other, they develop materialistic yearnings. Plagued by the same maladies as the entire consumer society, they find it difficult to resist the compelling power of the good (that is, material) life. What they aspire to is the status of the new idle class - imagining themselves as the aristocracy of spirit, they nevertheless willingly partake of the pleasures of consumerism.

Although *Tarr’s* bohemians look back with nostalgia on their mid-nineteenth-century predecessors, described in Henry Murger’s *Vie de Boheme* - a book that each of them considers a necessary read - they can place themselves within this tradition on a very superficial level, for example by wearing bohemian outfits. Their counter-culture posturing is reduced to collecting artistic trinkets and attitudinising; it has nothing to do with the ideal of bohemia as depicted by Murger, that is, a community of free souls beyond the pale of respectable society. *Tarr’s* characters are too shrewd to truly rebel against bourgeois, philistine mentality, because this would be tantamount to voluntary poverty. They lack the courage which Clement Greenberg (1993:541) mentions in his famous essay on avant-garde and kitsch, where he writes that “emigration

from bourgeois society to bohemia meant also an emigration from the markets of capitalism, upon which artists and writers had been thrown by the falling away of aristocratic patronage."

Anticipating Greenberg's findings, Lewis captures the moment when the inhabitants of the artistic underworld gradually discover the "umbilical cord of gold" (Greenberg 1993: 542) with which they are connected to those they despise - the bourgeoisie. Sometimes this cord of gold is literal, as many of *Tarr's* bohemians hail from bourgeois background and their "artistic" lifestyle is made possible thanks to allowances they receive from family homes. Lewis (1996: 117), describes them as "disciplined in their idleness," because the degree of their non-conformism is regulated by the ebbs and flows of funds sent in by their parents. The less fortunate aspirants to Parnassus who have no stable source of income must turn their art and ideology into a marketable commodity. What they sell to bourgeoisie is either their work, geared to the lowest common denominator of mass taste, or even just the "avant-garde" ideology. Thus, for example, a protagonist called Ernst Volker paints portraits of the middle class ladies, while the two scroungers Kreisler and Soltyk get money from people who are flattered to spend time in the presence of "artists." A mere impression of activity is sufficient to gain respect and recognition, as is the case with the painter Lowdnes, who "has enough money to be a Cubist" (Lewis 1996: 45) but does not produce much, only constantly pretends to be interrupted at work by unexpected visitors.

Once bohemianism is turned into a commodity, the role of its material manifestations increases. Hence the importance of artistic objects, outfits, props and trinkets, so well recognized by the artistically dressed Hobson or by the two polite society ladies, Bertha and Fraulein Lipmann, whose apartments are decorated so as to display the desirable "art-touch":

> [Hobson] was very athletic, and his dark and cavernous features had been constructed by Nature as a lurking place for villainies and passions. But he slouched and ambled along, neglecting his muscles. [...] The Art-touch was very observable. Hobson's Harris tweeds were shabby. A hat suggesting that his ancestors had been Plainsmen or some rough sunny folk, shaded unnecessarily his countenance, already far from open. (Lewis 1996: 22)

> [Fraulein Lipmann's] room, dress and manner, were a sort of chart to the way to admire [her]; the different points in her soul one was to gush about, the different hints that one was to let fall about her "rather" tragic life-story, the particular way

> one was to regard her playing of the piano. You felt that there was not a candlestick, or antimacassar in the room but had its lesson for you. (Lewis 1996: 131)

All such gadgets and accoutrements add a material, tangible dimension to bohemian ideology. Abstractions are reduced to objects which can be accumulated, bought and sold. In this way, form begins to outweigh content, and bohemianism degenerates into kitsch, becoming a matter of style without substance.

The most perceptive of the bunch of bourgeois-bohemians, Tarr, realizes this when he visits the flat of his art-student fiancee, Bertha. Upon entering the room, he is confronted by an abundance of phony, pseudo-artistic objects:

> Tarr was in the studio or salon. It was a complete Bourgeois-Bohemian interior. Green silk cloth and cushions of various vegetable and mineral shades covered everything, in mildewy blight. The cold, repulsive shades of Islands of he Dead, gigantic cypresses, grottoes of teutonic nymphs, had invaded this dwelling. Purple metal and leather steadily dispensed with expensive objects. There was the plaster-cast of Beethoven (some people who have frequented artistic circles get to dislike this face extremely), brass jars from Normandy, a photograph of Mona Lisa (Tarr hated the Mona Lisa). (Lewis 1996: 52)

The trinkets in Bertha's room represent the artificially synthetised mass culture that has been produced by industrialization. They are "works of art in the age of mechanical reproduction," cast in plaster, reduced to kitsch and made accessible to a mass audience. Tarr, the self-styled modernist *Übermensch*, reacts to them with horror, but at the same time acknowledges the pervasiveness and appeal of "the little," always threatening to contaminate "the large":

> She had loved him with all this. She had loved him with the plaster cast of Beethoven, attacked him with the Klingers, ambushed him from the Breton jars, in a funny, superficial, absorbing way. [...] The appeal of the *little* again. If he could only escape from *scale*. The price of preoccupation with the large was this perpetual danger from the *little.* (Lewis 1996: 73)

Among the many bourgeois-bohemian protagonists, Tan seems to be the closest to the ideal of the artist (in one of the letters Lewis (1963: 79) admits to making him a mouthpiece for his ideology). Very tellingly, however, even Tarr allows "the little" to overwhelm him completely: at the end of the novel he turns out to be every bit as idle and pretentious as the others, having wasted his creative talents on seducing *femmes fatales* and polite society ladies. The fact that Lewis does not "save" him from the general *malaise* of inauthenticity means that he probably cannot see any possibilities of redemption, or of autonomous

life, for an artist in a bourgeois environment. The forces which are remaking society at large are beyond the individual's control - one must ultimately yield to their powerful pull.

While *Tarr* offers an early perspective on the transformation of bohemianism into its opposite, *The Apes of God*, written in 1930, anatomizes the condition of the arts in postwar Europe. The setting has changed from Paris to London, where, in the recognizable milieu of Chelsea and Bloomsbury, Lewis detects the familiar symptoms of the modem cultural *malaise.* A trend that he finds particularly alarming is not so much the bohemian inclination towards bourgeois values, which has by then become the norm, but rather the infiltration of artistic circles by the bourgeoisie. As Lewis's introduction to the novel makes clear, the eponymous Apes - the monied amateurs usurping the name of artists and mimicking bohemian lifestyles - maintain a stranglehold on artistic creation, thus threatening the traditional distinction between the producers and consumers of art:

> Bohemia, just after World War One, was so full of *déclassés*, driving a pen or dipping a brush - Apes of God - that confusion ensued. Confusion was the result when it came to the *jeunesse doreé* taking up oil painting, their gold in future ceasing to be spent upon pictures (not their own) and in all spheres the passive rôle of the patron coming to an end. People no longer bought books, they wrote them. One began to recognize the people from the stalls and boxes acting on the stage; if a man had an expensive house he became an interior decorator, and so on and so forth. (Lewis 1955: 3)

The Apes of God depicts a society in which, in the words of one of the novel's protagonists, "Everyone able to afford to do so has become a 'bohemian'" (Lewis 1955: 119). Bohemianism as a lifestyle requires means, for it has been reduced to a new form of idleness. Its attractiveness lies not in the urge to create, but in the temptation to indulge in wastefulness while enjoying the status of intellectual elite. Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, a classic tum-of-the-twentieth-century analysis of consumer culture, provides an explanation for this state of affairs. To be an idler is a mark of superiority, for it sets the individual apart from persons forced to work for a living. The ruling canon of leisure-class life is "conspicuous consumption" and, resulting from it, "conspicuous waste." Under the conspicuous waste coda, the more useless an activity, service, or article, the greater the consumer's prestige. Counted among the occupations which do not carry the stigma of productive industry, bohemianism becomes a pastime of the leisure class. It is ennobling, for it seems to

be connected with abstract values, and at the same time expedient, for one's adherence to these values cannot be easily verified.

The lack of verification is what distresses Lewis most, as it makes possible the propagation of sham artistry. The "Encyclical" part of *The Apes of God* contains a warning against "all these masses of Gossip-mad, vulgar, pseudo-artist, *good-timers"* who "are as vulgar as any of their *nouveau riche* first cousins" but "more damaging for the very reason that they are identified, in the mind of the public, with art and with intelligence" (Lewis 1955: 121). Because the well-off bourgeois-bohemians do not really need to sell their work to survive as "artists," it is enough for them to occasionally come up with some trivial, amateurish imitation of serious art, which they can then popularize by making hype. In this way, the channel of communication between artist and public is blocked by false messages, and that which is of genuine value is obliterated in the deluge of mediocrity.

Consequently, in order to mark his presence, the real artist is forced to compete for attention. In keeping with the trends of the modem market, he has to deploy the tactics known from the advertising industry and seek out audiences for his work. So, while the bourgeois-bohemian can enjoy the life of an aloof idler, the truly creative person must invest his precious time in activities necessary to his economic survival. Lewis finds this situation humiliating; still, he sees no other possibility but to adapt to the rule of the day:

> The trouble is this: It does not matter what objective Nature supplies. The inventive artist is his own purveyor. But the society of which he forms a part, can, by its backwardness, indolence, or obtuseness, cause him a series of inconveniences; and above all, can, at certain times and under certain conditions, affect his pocket adversely and cause him to waste an absurd amount of time. When no longer able to produce his best work, it would not be a waste of time for a painter or for a writer to lecture, for example, on the subject of his craft. The propaganda, explanatory pamphlets, and the rest in which we, in this country, have to indulge, is so much time out of active life which would normally be spent as every artist wishes to spend his time, in work, in a state of complete oblivion as regards any possible public that his work may ever have. Yet were one's ideas on painting not formulated, and given out in the shape of a lecture, a pamphlet, or a critical essay, an impossible condition would result for an artist desirous of experimenting. (Lewis 1991: 160)

These words are full of intellectual pretension, but they reveal an awareness of the changing times. Much as the real artist may be distressed by commodity culture, he has to go along with it to a certain extent. Lewis understood this,

indulging willy-nilly in self-promotional campaigns: his numerous journals, autobiographies and treatises, the Enemy pose, the catchy titles for his texts all betray his knack for hype-making. Even if his marketing efforts were largely frustrated (he died far from prosperous), the ambivalence of his position must have given him mental dyspepsia. The concerns of his artist protagonists - Tarr, Kreisler, Zagreus, Dan Boleyn and others - seem to be also his concerns. Tortured by the questions he was trying to ask, as well as by the answers he came up with, he produced works which record the struggle for the impossible, the attempt to secure the sacred status for art in an increasingly commodified society.

One way to read Lewis is to treat his creations as an expression of the elitist longing for the time before democracy made things possible for everyone. Intrinsically political in his sensibilities, he feared

> the William Morris, tolstoyan, or other utopist dream of a millennium in which no one would have to work too much; and in which, above all, everyone would "have the scope to develop his personality," everybody be a "genius" of some sort; in which everyone would be an "artist" of some sort - singing, painting, composing or writing, as the case might be, and in which a light-hearted "communism" should reign in the midst of an idyllic plenty. (Lewis 1963: 124)

Such views may appear outrageous, but that should not prevent us from appreciating the accuracy of much that Lewis foresaw, especially when we consider the levelling dynamics of mass culture. Bearing in mind the fact that Lewis wrote from the perspective of modernism, "that uncanny moment when for the last time High Art still mattered enough to hate" (Kamiya 2001: 1), one has to give recognition to the more influential aspects of his legacy: existential anguish about the void that opens up before modem man, and the genuine concern about the direction our culture is taking.

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Meaning Created by the Language of Geoffrey Hill's Poetry

> All discourse is realized as event but understood as meaning [...] The word is always the bearer of the "emergent meaning" which specific contexts confer upon it.
>
> (Ricoeur 1994: 167)

All discourse is produced as an event, says Paul Ricoeur. Poetic discourse is realized as a particular kind of event because its understanding as meaning is extremely complex, going beyond "specific contexts." The reading of the lines of poetry is tantamount to the opening of new vistas of experience, leading the reader to a better self-understanding or even self-building, even though every reader can perceive the same text differently and the author is also just one of the readers at best.[1] The range of the meanings of a text is bound to grow in time due to the expansion and extension of the interconnected numbers of its interpretations in the process of reading.

The present paper pursues the theme of the multiple layers of meanings in Geoffrey Hill's poetry and its aim is to offer an assessment of the presence and role of the postmodern manner of writing which penetrates the basically neo-modernist texture of his poems. The following lines that come from his latest volume - "don't wreck a good phrase simply to boost sense" (Hill 2006: 27) or "the eternal falsity of poetry is that its events occur in a time that differs from reality" (Hill 2006: 44) - remind us of the familiar concept of "simulacrum," developed and presented by Jean Baudrillard.[2] Therefore, we should not be surprised that the modernist lines of Geoffrey Hill tend to carry a number of postmodern ideas and influences, especially when his later poetry is concerned. Indeterminacy of the meaning of some of his poetic lines seems to have been intentional: the reader has been left more work to do and more scope to cover to interpret those intricate and ambiguous lines.

[1] "What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant; verbal meaning and mental meaning have different destinies" (Ricoeur 1994: 91).

[2] "The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth - it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true. Ecclesiastes" (Baudrillard 1983: 1).

Language is the stuff that any poem is made of, but Geoffrey Hill's language is unusually complex and ambiguous. The search for meanings in this kind of poetry forces the reader to plunge into myth, history, technical innovations practised by the poet, and into the etymological layers of the English language. The influences coming from the reading of other European poets, such as Paul Celan or Lope de Vega, for example, are helpful in the search for the meanings of Hill's mysterious and elusive poetry. The meanings of the poem can be discovered by the perspicacious reader as well as created by the poem itself. The dialogue between the reader and the poetic text is unavoidable and new shades of meanings are destined to be bom in the process. Geoffrey Hill has always been conscious of the voluble character of the poetic text and he has also been constantly striving for the perfection and for the victory over the "inertia of language" (Hill 1984: 2)

In his essay, entitled "Poetry as 'Menace' and 'Atonement,'" Hill presents a very ambiguous linkage between the perfection of the sense of language and the moral exigencies that some poets succumb to. Referring to Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, he remarks, "There is a sense in which the modem artist is called upon to atone for his own illiberal pride and a sense in which he is engaged in a vicarious expiation for the pride of the culture which itself rejects him" (Hill 1984: 4). "Empirical guilt" that poets experience is referred to as a writer's attempt to make "a vicarious atonement for other writers' sins of commission and omission" (Hill 1984: 13). Hill seems to be tom between the moral and technical demands set by his sense of cultural and historical responsibility. On the one hand, while speaking about T. S. Eliot, for example, Hill (1984: 13) stresses the "indefinite extent" of language to which the poet was forced to surrender "and seek his focus there." The symbolist stress laid on the perfection of form plays a very significant role in Hill's view of literature. On the other hand, the older emphasis placed on moral responsibility of a poet is equally powerfully emphasized by him.[3]

The conflict endured in the shameless world, that is, in a society of "aggregates and items" (Hill 1984: 18) lays a double duty on a poet, in Hill's opinion. The feelings of attrition, contrition, shame and fear are bound to go hand in

[3] "However much and however rightly we protest against the vanity of supposing it to be merely the ' spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, ' poetic utterance is nonetheless an utterance of the self, the self demanding to be loved, demanding love in the form of recognition and 'absolution' [...] This dismay is as nothing compared to the shocking encounter with 'empirical guilt,' not as a manageable hypothesis, bust as irredeemable error in the very substance and texture of his craft and pride" (Hill 1984: 17).

hand with the growing demand for perfecting the poet's mastery over the language.[4] The ambiguity and verbal difficulty of Geoffrey Hill's writing present a daunting task to any researcher. The consolation is that the task is endless and inexhaustible, which means that the search for the elucidation of the poems can always be expanded and enlarged upon by the future researchers.

In his first collection of poems, titled *For the Unfallen* (1959) Geoffrey Hill introduces his principal poetic themes, which are those of myth, religion, fascination with nature, with the monuments of the past and the creation of words. The multiple meanings of the poems seem to emerge from the words themselves. The first poem of the collection, significantly titled "Genesis," enlarges upon an act of creation. It is not very clear whether the created object is the world or the poem. It is equally unclear whether the creator is God or the poet who just introduces himself as being the one "crying the miracles of God" (Hill 1994: 3). The paradise presented in the poem seems to be the paradise produced by the language.

Biblical themes of innocence and guilt are also treated in a very contradictory manner in the famous poem "Holy Thursday," fashioned after William Blake's two poems, bearing the same title and presented respectively in his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience.* As the influence of Blake's poems on Geoffrey Hill has been thoroughly analysed in numerous critical studies, including that of Andrew Michael Roberts, carried out from the angle of history and politics, I would merely like to stress the verbal contradictions present in Hill's poem - the contradictions conspicuous also in all of his oeuvre. Terror and consolation seem to form an inseparable unity in Hill's "Holy Thursday" where we read that "Child and nurse walk hand in glove." Such a union of the opposites is also expressed in the following lines in the poem:

> Lo, she lies gentle and innocent of desire
> Who was my constant myth and terror. (Hill 1994: 7)

The poem "God's Little Mountain" continues the paradoxical and contradictory themes of the creation of the world as we know it in parallel with the world of language. The poet complains that he continually "waited for the word that was not given" (Hill 1994: 6) until he reached the ambiguous state of which he speaks at the end of the poem:

[4] "The major caveat which I would enter against a theological view of literature is that, too often, it is not theology at all, but merely a restatement of the neo-Symbolist mystique celebrating verbal mastery" (Hill 1984: 17).

I [...] fell, until I found the world again
Now I lack grace to tell what I have seen;
For though the head frames words the tongue has none.
And who will prove the surgeon to this stone? (Hill 1994: 6)

In one of Geoffrey Hill's finest collections of poems entitled *Tenebrae* (1978) the poet continues presenting the tension between the transcendental search for God and bodily love. Passion permeates all the poems, and we can admire the poet's "neo-Symbolist mystique celebrating verbal mastery" (Hill 1984: 17). Closed neo-symbolist structures, where one image adumbrates another, and in this manner creates a circle of interlaced ranges of meaning, are varied and intertwined with open multifaceted post-modern structures whose meanings are unsheltered, and which seem to be waiting for the reader to recreate them anew. It is only very gradually that readers can succeed in entering into a dialogue with the text, and the intended meanings still remain very ambiguous. For example, the following lines from the poem "Tenebrae":

Possessed by you I chose to have no choice,
Fulfilled in you I sought no further quest, (Hill 1994: 160)

leave the readers puzzled with the multiple meanings. Who is the addressee of those lines - God or a mortal beloved? Further lines, highlighted by the image of "your cross," bring some clarity into the inherent multiplicity of meanings. However, the tension between the adjectives "passionate" and "passionless" suggests a different, though barely potential, range of meanings, namely, that of the unfulfilled bodily love:

As I am passionate so you with pain
Turn my desire; as you seem passionless
So I recoil from all that I would gain,
Wounding myself upon forgetfulness,
False ecstasies, which you in truth sustain
As you sustain each item of your cross. (Hill 1994: 160)

The epithets "passionate" and "passionless" are joined through their opposition in the above quoted lines. Once they have been mentioned, both of them perform their interdependent roles in the poem, that is, both of them work together, suggesting each other through their mutual negation.

In the fifth part of the collection *Lachrimae*, titled "Pavana Dolorosa," the play of the words, which formally seem to deny each other's presence, creates a new presence which is even more forceful, more mysterious and leading

to a frightful conclusion in the end. The line "self-seeking hunter of forms" clearly defines the endless aims and pursuits of the poet, whereas the paradoxes inherent in the oxymoronic phrases such as "your silence is an ecstasy of sound" (Hill 1994: 137) culminating in the final three lines:

> And your nocturnals blaze upon the day.
> I founder in desire for things unfound.
> I stay amid the things that will not stay. (Hill 1994: 137)

hint at the paradoxical nature of all creation, divine as well as human. The other phrases, such as "Ash-Wednesday feasts," "ascetic opulence," "music's creation of the moveless dance," etc., are no longer able to surprise us. They are the expressions of the new world, created by Geoffrey Hill, which nevertheless expands our perception of the paradoxical nature of the world that we inhabit.

Andrew Michael Roberts compares Hill's "Pavana Dolorosa" with Robert Southwell's "Saint Peter's Complaint." The historical note has been sounded, and the unfortunate martyr of the Elizabethan England has received his poetical return in Geoffrey Hill's oeuvre, the more so that the epigraph marking the whole collection of *Lachrimae or Seven Tears Figured in Seven Passionate Pavanes* has also been taken from Robert Southwell's poem "Marie Magdalen's Funeral Teares," published in 1591. In his poem, though, Geoffrey Hill seems to doubt the possible "joys" of the "self-wounding martyrdom" leading to "Active consonance," whereas the "self-seeking hunter of forms," that is the poet, knows that "there is no end to his pursuits" (Hill 1994: 137). Poetry is thus given the priority of significance in Geoffrey Hill's poetry; religious imagery has just emerged as a constituent part of the poet's paradoxical language, which seems to create its own religious dimensions. But when, for example, we read the following lines from "Genesis":

> At dawn the Mass
> Burgeons from stone
> A Jesse tree
> of resurrection (Hill 1994: 127)

we are confronting the problem of whether the enigmatic language does not assert the omnipotence of religious presence. The language itself seems to create "ghosts for love" on "forlorn altars" (Hill 1994: 127).

In a truly postmodernist manner, Geoffrey Hill is capable of subjecting real feelings to the demands of language, where language clearly gains the priority over all else in the newly created universe of poetry. For example, in "Coplas,"

which forms a part of the poem "The Songbook of Sebastian Arruruz," where the eponymous Arruruz is also the invented name of an invented poet, we read the following lines: The metaphor holds; is a snug house.

> You are outside, lost somewhere. I find myself
> Devouring verses of stranger passion
> And exile. The exact words
> Are fed into my blank hunger for you. (Hill 1994: 84)

"The metaphor, verses of stranger passion" as well as "the exact words" seem to hold dominion over the real feelings which, in a good postmodem fashion, are not supposed to make stuff and substance of poetry. The poet "like a disciplined scholar" is trying

> To find value
> In a bleak skill, as in the thing restored:
> The long-lost words of choice and valediction. (Hill 1994: 80)

The only thing which seems to be truly real are metaphors and language itself.

The collection of poems, significantly titled *The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy* (1983), is dedicated to the life and death of the French poet Charles Péguy, bom in 1873 and killed in battle in 1914. The themes of history, war, myth and religion get intertwined, and all of them are viewed from the vantage point of poetry. Memory dominates the verbal scenes of battle and death on the fields of France. "In memory of these things these words were bom" is the final utterance of the Charles Péguy cycle.

The first poem of the cycle comments on the murder of the French socialist deputy Jean Jaurès. Geoffrey Hill parallels the ghost of the French deputy with that of Caesar. Indirectly, Péguy is compared with Bratus. The fatal question, though, which Hill asks is the following:

> Did Péguy kill Jaurès? Did he incite
> The assassin? (Hill 1994: 165)

Hill raises the question of whether the people, especially poets, are answerable for their inciting words; in this case, the words would be those pertaining to Péguy's criticism of Jaurès. The question is reminiscent of the self-rebuke which W. B. Yeats addressed towards himself in his poem "The Man and the Echo:" "Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?" (Yeats 1991: 221). In both cases, the questions are rhetorical. In Hill's poem, the poet

is urged to "defend your first position to the last word" (1994: 166), where the word takes priority over any military positions.

As Charles Péguy is known to have been a follower of Bergson in his acceptance of the principles of organicism and criticism of the possibilities of technical and mechanical advancement, which would turn an individual into a cog of the machine or a number among the masses, Geoffrey Hill celebrates Charles Péguy's response to Bergson's ideas and links the French philosopher with

> an army
> Of poets, converts, vine-dressers, men skilled
> In wood or metal, peasants from the Beauce,
> Terse teachers of Latin and those unschooled
> In all but such hard rudiments of grace. (Hill 1994: 168)

The privilege given to poets, aristocracy and individual craftsmen is very similar to W. B. Yeats' urging the poets of the future to "[s]ing the peasantry and then / Hard riding country gentlemen (1991: 211). Hill knows very well that words may have many meanings, that "history is law, clad in our skins of silver, steel and hide" (Hill 1994: 173) and that

> Counting our blessings, honestly admire
> The wrath of the peacemakers, for example
> Christ driving the money-changers from the temple,
> Applaud the Roman steadiness under fire (Hill 1994: 173)

we perceive that "the metaphors of blood begin to flow" (Hill 1994: 174), while poetry becomes more important than real blood.

The play of words creates new ranges of meaning, all of them challenging our perspicacity as readers. The farce of history is played out against "the last rites of truth, or the Last Judgement [...] or Mercy" (Hill 1994: 179), all of which are presented as being much the same in Hill's poetry.

The sentencing of Dreyfus is paralleled with "the world-famous stories of Jules Verne" or the scenes at Golgotha. In both instances:

> Serenely the mob howls
> Its silent mouthings hammered into scrolls
> Tom from Apocalypse. (Hill 1994: 173)

The religious dimension given to the famous trial of the 19th century demonstrates the archetypal character both of the events and of the mob, which are

always able to hit the expected note while searching for a scapegoat. It is through his mastery over the language that Geoffrey Hill distances himself from all those "we," famous in history and represented by "Pilate, Caiaphas in his thin soutane and Judas" (Hill 1994: 173).

The historical figures of Péguy or Jaurès or even Dreyfus acquire a new reality in the poetry of Geoffrey Hill. Historical judgement should be left for the historians to attain. The poetical work accommodates history only to the extent which permits the poet to create an absolutely new world based on the historical circumstances. However, the play of language, the polysemy of words, the twisted and ambiguous usages of idioms bring all these events into our present world, and make us perceive them all anew and very differently. Hill's mastery over the language implies his mastery over the historical events, which gain a new life in *The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy*. Still, while contradicting R. C. Nettleship's utilitarian and business-like approach towards language, Geoffrey Hill insists that "there is something 'mysterious', some 'dark and disputed matter' implicated in the nature of language itself' (Hill 1984: 151).

In his latest volume of poems, *Without Title*, Geoffrey Hill continues to pursue the mysterious trends of language as such. Paradoxes amalgamate and clash, creating in this manner new and still unexplored ranges of meaning. Even memory becomes suspect. "Men of stale will" may continue "nursing their secret wounds," but the author knows that the man ruled by the mob, that is "the mob-ruled" may have only "five seconds' freedom." "The work of mourning [...] bugles dead achievements" and therefore, when viewed against the exigencies and expectations posed by the mob-ruled:

> Metaphysics remain
> In common language something of a joke.
> Mourning my meaning is what I meant to say. (Hill 2006: 14)

In our age, the existence of meaning itself is threatened and that is why meaning may become simply a cliché unless it is created by poetry. The mourning for the meaning, absent or present, creates meaning. "Symbol bums off reality" (Hill 2006: 12), we read in another poem, and symbol always indicates the search for meanings as well as for ideas. It is not in vain that one of the poems is paradoxically titled "On the Reality of the Symbol."

Aware of the threats to meaning, Geoffrey Hill still connects poetry with moral and ethical demands. Justice still is one of his favourite words. Although the poet knows that "[s]o few of us absolved when what we write / Sets us to

rights on some scale of justice" (Hill 2006: 26), he still insists that he may be just "a whiz at ordinary language" (Hill 2006: 25) and, consequently, people may often mishear him, but the demands of his art are the same. More than ever does he see "through a painter's eyes" and more than ever does his desire to "stay immortal and ageless" (Hill 2006: 3) get delegated to the sphere of the dream. His only consolation remains that "dead friends are no remoter than in life" (Hill 2006: 3).

Since one of the concerns of the present paper, as has been mentioned at the beginning, is the neo-modemist connection in Hill's poetry, it seems appropriate at this point to mention links and parallels, necessarily limited here to a couple of examples for reasons of space, with the work of modernist poets, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. Those links and parallels find their direct and indirect reflection particularly in Hill's latest volume of poetry.

In his essay, significantly titled "Our Word is Our Bond," which is included in the collection of *The Lords of Limit*, Hill writes about Ezra Pound as well as a number of other poets, writers and philosophers. Hill does not justify Ezra Pound's political delusions but still he goes back to Pound's trial and finds it more paradoxical than any paradox itself.[5]

What is of more interest, however, for the present paper, relates to Hill's comments on Pound setting high demands for the definitive character of language as such and Hill's criticism of Pound's inaccuracy in the latter's translations of Propertius. To recall what T. S. Eliot said as regards Pound's poem "Homage to Sextus Propertius" seems important at this place: "It is not a translation, it is a paraphrase, or still more truly (for the instructed) a persona" (Eliot 1991: xxiii). Geoffrey Hill, on the other hand, comments on Ezra Pound conflating two lines of Propertius' Latin because "the major implications of the change certainly involve a claim to status, to be 'among' the true poets" (Hill 1984: 156). In short, by creating his personas, including that of Sextus Propertius, Ezra Pound seems to have been fighting his own battles directed against what he thought to be the narrow-mindedness of his entourage in England, in 1917. His poem abounds in numerous classical names and references, helping the poet to emphasize the principal subject of the poem, which is poetry and the autonomy of the poet. The poem ends on a very fragmentary Modernist note, leaving a possibility for the reader to connect very disparate images.

[5] "At the same time, 'the peculiar legal paradox' that, as a result of the court's verdict, 'Pound found himself, in effect, under a sentence of life imprisonment despite the fact that he was innocent in the eyes of the law' is in itself more oxymoronic than paradoxical" (Hill 1984: 154).

Geoffrey Hill's poem "Ex Propertio," on the other hand, is very different in character. To begin with, it is a short poem, in contrast to Ezra Pound's text being of a substantial length and volume. In this poem, Hill seems to be trying to fathom out his life-long themes of love and law, and to link them as well as to separate them through rhetoric and poetry:

> I bowelled my loyalties to law and love
> Rhetorical in parts. (Hill 2006: 61)

Hill's poem opens on an ironical note reminiscent of literary traditions pertaining both to W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot:

> Encouraged by a glib-tongued haruspex
> To practice divination - what's wrong there? (Hill 2006: 61)

The lines are reminiscent of the denunciatory opening of T. S. Eliot's fifth part of *East Coker:*

> To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,
> To report the behaviour of the sea monster,
> Describe the horoscope, haruspicate and scry. (Eliot 1991: 198)

Eliot links the above mentioned occupations with the playing of cards and calls them "pastimes and drugs," especially if they get contrasted with the far worthier and further searching poetical endeavours, such as

> To apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time. (Eliot 1991: 198)

Geoffrey Hill, on the other hand, asserts the reviving power of love over that of the self-consuming law:

> Love as a necromant
> Re-infiltrates the dead whilst law usurps
> Upon itself. (Hill 2006: 61)

Both poets clearly mistrust "divinations charms."

Whereas Pound writes of Propertius' love for Cynthia, Hill stresses that "the act of love surpasses eloquence" (Hill 2006: 61). All the three poets nevertheless unequivocally proclaim their absolute faith in the powers of the poetical language. Hill speaks of this in these very impressive lines which are his homage to the potential of the language:

Words are never stone
Except in their appearance. See me out,
Long-domiciled epiphanies I trust. (Hill 2006: 64)

These lines coming from the poem "On the Sophoclean Moment in English Poetry" can be clearly perceived as Geoffrey Hill's creative motto. The meanings of the long-domiciled epiphanies are created by and revealed through words.

Geoffrey Hill is extremely skilful, aptly playing with the similarities and differences offered by poetical language. The poet appears to be certain that there is but "one stop from Sophocles to Sepulchre" (Hill 2006: 64). However, although the Sophoclean Moment may last only for a moment (Hill 2006: 64), the attempt to become Sophoclean will always be there.

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Uncanny Authors, Ambiguous Tales: Metafictional Discourse in J. M. Coetzee's Novels *Foe* and *The Master of Petersburg*

Since the publication, in the late 1960s, of two influential essays, Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1967) and Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969), the question of authorship has continued to be the site of intense debate in literary theory. As Andrew Bennett (2005: 127) points out,

> critical interest in literature is driven by an uncertainty about the author, about what the author is, about what *this* author is (this author that we are reading, now, a book in our hands). And such an interest is impelled in fact by the author's irresistible infraction of the limits of textuality, meaning, intention. The condition on which criticism and theory are undertaken, the condition even of reading, is this crisis, this crisis of literature, this uncanny, undecidable author (original emphasis).

Although postmodernism challenges the idea of the author as source and centre of the text, author figures, paradoxically, have become pervasive in postmodem fiction where they often function as a means to articulate a text's metafictional reflection.

This essay aims to discuss how the contemporary debate about the author and authorship is addressed by J. M. Coetzee in his novels *Foe* (1986) and *The Master of Petersburg* (1994). J. M. Coetzee is seen by critics as "a self-conscious postmodernist," "a writer's writer" whose central preoccupation is the nature of authorship, the writer's authority over his subject, as well as the broader issue of the cultural authority to which fiction written within the Western tradition can lay claim (Lowry 1999).

In the two novels under discussion here, Coetzee has revisited authors of the past: *Foe* features Daniel Defoe and rewrites *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) from the female castaway's point of view, while *The Master of Petersburg* re-imagines Dostoevsky and conjures up the genesis of his novel *The Possessed* (1872). Both *Foe* and *The Master of Petersburg* foreground the authors of their pretexts and fictionalize the way the precursory novels were conceived; both can be read

as extensive metafictional discourses offering a developing commentary on the nature and status of the activity of story-telling / story-writing and linking it with notions of power, authority and ownership. It should be added that Defoe and Dostoevsky are the two authors whose influence on Coetzee's writing has been especially significant, they figure prominently not only in his fiction but also in his criticism.

In *Foe* Coetzee revisits and subverts the source text by inserting into the original plot the character of Susan Barton, a female castaway on Cruso's [sic] island. Rescued by an English ship, Susan and Friday finally return to London, yet Cruso dies on the voyage back to England. Out of the four sections of the novel only the first (and the shortest) one - Susan's account of the island episode - offers a narrative which can claim to be a version of the Robinson Crusoe story. The remainder of the novel dramatizes Susan's efforts to tell the island story first through and then over and against the writer Daniel Foe (later Daniel Defoe).

Foe is both a metafictional and political allegory questioning the assumptions of race, class and gender underlying the works of the Western literary canon; it has been described by Dominic Head (1997: 14) as a "textual decolonization." In particular, Coetzee's novel narrativizes the exclusion practices which operate in the construction of a literary canon and reveals that "storytellers can certainly silence, exclude, and absent certain past events - and people" (Hutcheon 1991: 107). As the readers follow Susan's desperate attempt to have her story told and to retrieve Friday's story, they come "gradually to realize the criminal distortion by which Susan will be written out of the story altogether, and the tragic truth of Friday's experience will be misrepresented as benign, as comedy" (Burnett 1996: 245). Drawing our attention to the fact that Foe was Defoe's real name, Coetzee exposes him as enemy of truth, the giver of false witness. Paula Burnett (1996: 245) reminds us that "in Protestant Christian parlance the Foe is the devil, the old enemy. In the moral landscape of the text, Mr Foe is unmasked as a figure of the devil, seducing with his apparently reasonable blandishments, then disappearing when he has done his evil work, leaving a trail of unpaid debts." Thus, Coetzee's novel constructs authorship as seduction and betrayal, as distortion of truth, while Foe - the author, representing the voice of the elite culture of patriarchal power, is seen as a bearer of guilt who, by silencing the voices of the Other of gender and the racial Other, fails in his authorial responsibility.

In Coetzee's novel, there is a continuing debate as to who determines the boundaries of the story and, as a result, controls and owns the narrative. Since

Susan shared the island experience with Cruso and Friday, can she claim the island story as her own? Or is she only telling Cruso's story in his absence? And what are Friday's rights in this regard? While Susan wants to recount the island episode, she realizes that she is not equipped to do it and needs Foe's experience and established reputation as professional writer. Yet, Susan's views as to where her story begins and ends are very different from those of Foe. While Foe sees her story as describing a quest for her abducted daughter, with the adventure of the island being only a fragment of it, Susan insists that her time spent in Brazil, searching for her daughter, is not part of her story. As Patrick Corcoran (1996: 260) observes, this differing point of view about the limits of the story and especially about who has the right to set those limits, contains elements of a power-struggle. The metafictional discourse here closely parallels the novel's exploration of power relationships.

Coetzee further problematizes the question of the ownership of stories by highlighting the polysemantic nature of the author's name. Following the ideas of Michel Foucault (1979) who wrote that the author's name has both a descriptive and a designatory function, Coetzee calls attention to the fact that the author's name functions as a cultural signifier and that today Defoe has become a half-real, half-fictional character. According to Jean-Paul Engelibert (1996: 272), there exists a myth of Daniel Defoe - the author, which constructs Defoe as "the poor but prolific writer, eternally creating yet eternally the victim of his own undertakings, inventor of the 'English novel.'" This mythic Defoe, writes Engelibert (1996: 268):

> combines all the characteristics of the writer and the adventurer. He presents us with the spectacle of adversity and of perseverance, of courage and of genius, of a life of suffering and wandering and yet a life of inexhaustible energy; inventing a new literary form against all the odds he becomes a hero of the act of writing.

In other words, just as the author generates texts, texts generate the author. Revealed to be a discursive construct, the author is dispossessed of his work; the authoritative and controlling role of the author is called into question and the author's exclusive right over his own texts is problematized. Coetzee's novel also rejects what Roland Barthes (1995) called the myth of filiation - the traditional notion of authorship that views the author as a kind of parent giving life to a text - and emphasizes the intertextual nature of authorship as it portrays Foe feeding his writing on other people's stories.

Coetzee's text offers a view of the creative process as possessing an extremely ambiguous nature. On the one hand, writing is seen as an authenticating

and authorizing process - something necessary to record experience and give it "substance:" without any clear written account of her stay on the island, Susan feels she is a "being without substance, a ghost" (Coetzee 1987: 51). On the other hand, writing inevitably involves misrepresentation and plagiarism.

Foe steals from Susan not only the island narrative but also her life story to use it as source material for another novel, *Roxana, or The Fortunate Mistress.* What is more, his fictional narrative gives Susan a false understanding of her own history. The appearance of the second Susan Barton, who claims to be the long lost daughter of the first, further complicates the story. In the end Susan seems unable to distinguish fact from fiction any longer. The question she asks about the second Susan: "Is she substantial or is she a story too?" (Coetzee 1987: 152), remains unanswered. The introduction of the mysterious figure of Susan's daughter destabilizes the narrative and seems to suggest that the dividing line between fiction and reality can prove to be blurred. Coetzee's novel deconstructs what Gérard Genette (1995: 236) calls "a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells" and becomes an expression of the characteristic postmodern view of reality as textuality suggesting that we all, "the narrator and his narratees - you and I - perhaps belong to some narrative."

In the final section of the novel Susan's first-person narration is replaced by that of an unidentified first-person narrator, destabilizing the narrative further both in temporal and fictional terms. This new unnamed and unidentified narrator enters a London property and finds Susan and Foe, presumably dead, in a bed and Friday bricked up alive in an alcove. Pressing his ear close to the door, the narrator hears some strange noises flowing from behind it: "From his mouth, without a breath, issue the sounds of the island" (Coetzee 1987: 154). Then the opening action of slipping overboard is repeated and the whole narrative is revised by revealing that Susan died in the shipwreck with which the narrative began. This cryptic and dreamlike section of the novel received various interpretations.

Paula Burnett identifies the new first-person narrator with the authorial voice - that of Coetzee himself. Friday's story cannot be contained within the bounds of Coetzee's narration, the author can only hand over the narration in dread and hope to Friday as the guilty white race looks to the victimized black for redemption. According to the critic,

> Coetzee as a white South African here acknowledges that he is not empowered to speak for black Africa: the black story will be told elsewhere. [...] The final

> narrator falls silent in the posture of reverent listener, his phase of utterance ended - a symbol of the end of white domination. (Burnett 1996: 248)

On the other hand, the whole metafictional reflection which this part of the novel articulates may be understood as being aimed at disrupting the traditional power relations implicit in the dichotomy author-reader and rejecting a linear epistemology according to which the left-hand term is seen as superior and dominant. Both Patrick Corcoran and Jean-Paul Engelibert (1996) argue that the author's narrative is replaced in the final section by the reader's narrative who makes sense of the text in a new way. According to Patrick Corcoran (1996: 265), "the power relationships which are analysed through the metafictional discourse must naturally include the reader who also has the power to liberate or enslave." In his turn, Jean-Paul Engelibert (1996: 275-6) points out that

> the final chapter presents a Utopian situation in which the narrative finds itself severed from all authority. [...] The narrator-reader has taken over from the female narrator who wanted to be the author. And it is by and through him that the text flows forward, an impersonal energy which disperses itself in the immensity, which bathes him and flows over him. Here, the story of the island no longer has an author and no longer belongs to anyone.

Julie Sanders (2006:111,112) suggests that the final section aims at emphasizing the fictionality of the narrative the reader has just been following, while the sounds emanating from Friday render him "a semantic signifier of the island, and all that was suppressed, oppressed, or repressed in Defoe's 'master-text.'"

In comparison with *Foe*, the novel *The Master of Petersburg* is less experimental in its narrative structure; however, it provides a complex and disturbing reflection on creativity at a deeper philosophical level. The novel features Fyodor Dostoevsky as its protagonist and deals with the period of his life leading up to his writing of *The Possessed.* The action takes place in 1869 as Dostoevsky, despite the threat of creditors and the secret police, returns to Petersburg to discover the truth behind the sudden death of his stepson, Pavel, with whom he had a difficult but intense relationship. Agonized by grief and guilt, he moves into the room Pavel rented from a widow called Anna Sergeyevna and reads his diary. He becomes sexually involved with Anna Sergeyevna and attempts to learn from her young daughter, Matryosha, how his stepson lived and died. Dostoevsky is interrogated by councillor Maximov, who investigates Pavel's death and his connections with the Nechaevists, a clandestine group of nihilist terrorists. Dostoevsky also meets the fierce anarchist Sergei Nechayev himself.

Though some elements of the novel recall certain aspects of the life of the Russian writer, Coetzee does not offer a literary biography of Dostoevsky. Just like in Defoe's case, Coetzee rather draws on the myth of Dostoevsky - the author whose name is redolent with complex meaning: one of the founding fathers of modem prose; the author of dark, intellectually complex novels dealing with the themes of suffering, evil and the quest for God and famous for their psychological insights; the writer who was an epileptic all his life and a compulsive gambler and whose brooding, tortured characters are believed to reflect his own manias and rages. The Dostoevsky figure functions in the novel as an emblem of a modem writer. Using Dostoevsky as the focaliser of the novel's third-person narration, Coetzee aims to present the complicated state of mind of an author and to further reflect on the ambiguities of the creative process and ethical responsibilities of a writer.

Coetzee's novel subverts the idea of creative writing as a noble and wholesome activity. By portraying the irreconcilable and often distasteful contradictions within the author's mind and showing how the author draws inspiration from the unlikeliest sources, Coetzee offers a dark view of the creative process as a transgression, a perversion. Remembering the question he was asked by Maximov's assistant: "What kind of book do you write?" - Coetzee's Dostoevsky believes the correct answer should be: "I write perversions of the truth. I choose the crooked road and take children into dark places. I follow the dance of the pen" (Coetzee 1999: 235-6).

In his novel Coetzee appropriates the famous chapter "At Tikhon's," written by Dostoevsky for *The Possessed* but suppressed by his editor M. N. Katkov. This chapter, though never reinstated in the novel, is usually supplied as an appendix in modem editions. In the chapter, the character Nikolai Stavrogin confesses to a sordid liaison with a fourteen-year-old girl, Matryosha. The character of Matryosha, the setting of Stavrogin's tale as well as allusions to pedophilia, appear in *The Master of Petersburg* emphasizing the idea that there are elements in writing which take the writer to the edge of what is ethical. As Coetzee's Dostoevsky muses watching Matryosha: "He has no difficulty in imagining this child in her ecstasy. His imagination seems to have no bounds" (Coetzee 1999: 76). The writer is aware that in his writing as well as in his life, "shame seems to have lost its power" (Coetzee 1999: 24) and he contemplates writing a "book of the night, in which every excess would be represented and no bounds respected," he calls it "a book of evil" (Coetzee 1999: 134).

In *The Master of Petersburg* Coetzee enhances his negative metaphor of writing as betrayal developed in *Foe.* The novel presents the writing activity

through a series of metaphors comparing the writer to a spy, a secret agent and a trespasser, amoral and passive, devoid of shame, who constantly violates the privacy of other people. Initially, mourning the death of his stepson, Dostoevsky believes that fiction is the art of raising the dead and sees the writer as an Orpheus waking up the dead. He hopes that writing as a means of identification with his dead stepson will eventually lead to his own salvation. However, as Dostoevsky reflects with striking openness about himself and what he perceives as evil, ridiculous and shameful in himself, he comes to see writing as treachery and immoral exploitation: he uses everyone and everything - his own very real feelings, his most intimate relationships with other people, his dead son's writing - to fuel his writing:

> Poet, lyre-player, enchanter, lord of resurrection, that is what I am called to be. And the truth? [...JI pay and I sell: that is my life. Sell my life, sell the lives of those around me. Sell everyone [...] a Judas, not a Jesus. Sell you, sell your daughter, sell all those I love. Sold Pavel alive and will now sell the Pavel inside me, if I can find a way. Hope to find a way of selling Sergei Nechaev too. A life without honour; treachery without limit; confession without end. (Coetzee 1999: 152-3, 222)

For the writer, nothing is going to remain private, everything is going to be published. Betrayal and venality seem to be indispensable components of writing. However, the writer has to pay a very high price for it. At the end of the novel Dostoevsky thinks: "*They pay him lots of money for writing books,* said the child repeating the dead child. What they failed to say was that he had to give up his soul in return" (Coetzee 1999: 250, original emphasis).

Portraying Dostoevsky mourning the death of his son and turning his grief into fiction, Coetzee seems to project onto the fictional writer-character his own private tragedy - his agony over the death of his twenty-three-year-old son in a mysterious falling accident which, as we may infer, has also been turned into prize-winning, best selling and financially rewarding fiction. The father-writer is compared to a scavenger feeding on the decaying flesh: "A father like an old grey rat creeping in afterwards upon the love scene to see what is left for him. Sitting on the corpse in the dark, pricking his ears, gnawing, listening, gnawing" (Coetzee 1999:107). However, writing, being an expression of parental bereavement, also becomes a painful way for the father to adjust to the death of his son.

Central to Coetzee's novel is the exploration of writing as confession and the reflection on what Sue Kossew calls "the self-mythologizing nature of the text" (1996: 63). Coetzee also dealt with the problem "whether it is possible

to tell the truth about oneself' in his essay "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky" first published in 1985. In this essay, analyzing "At Tikhon's," Coetzee (1992: 289) emphasizes Dostoevsky's presentation of the limits of secular confession, which is characterized by deception and self-deception and represents only partial truth. In the novel, Anna Sergeyevna asks Dostoevsky: "Do you act from the heart all the time? I don't think so" and adds: "Why should I believe you? Why should you believe yourself?" (Coetzee 1999: 167) questioning the very possibility of truth as a potential to know oneself. Coetzee's Dostoevsky reveals "nothing so much as the helplessness of confession before the desire of the self to construct its own truth" (Coetzee 1992: 279). However, despite the novel's skepticism about the accessibility of truth and the possibility of objective self-knowledge, Dostoevsky's self-confrontation and interrogation of his own myth-making is shown as "the most radical intellectual and even spiritual courage" (Coetzee 1995: 15-6).

The novel's final description of the act of writing, when Dostoevsky begins to write what will become *The Possessed*, may be interpreted as the most explicit embodiment of "the Dostoevskian confrontation between faith and skepticism" (Coetzee 1992: 248), or, as Cary Henson (1998) describes it, of the main philosophical debate staged by Coetzee in his novel - the debate between cynicism and grace. In his essay "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky," Coetzee (1992: 392) defines the debate as follows: "Cynicism: the denial of any ultimate basis for values. Grace: a condition in which the truth can be told clearly, without blindness. The debate is staged by Dostoevsky: the interlocutors are called Stavrogin and Tikhon." In the novel, as Cary Henson (1998) points out, this debate is conducted among Dostoevsky's personal, political and authorial selves.

Writing his controversial chapter "At Tikhon's," the writer gambles with and provokes God:

> It is an assault on the innocence of a child. It is an act for which he can expect no forgiveness. With it he has crossed the threshold. Now God must speak, now God dare no longer remain silent. To corrupt a child is to force God. The device he has made arches and springs like a trap, a trap to catch God. (Coetzee 1987: 249)

Not only is this fragment an expression of the writer's skepticism, but, as Rachel Lawlan (1998: 153) rightly observes, it also reveals Dostoevsky's (and Coetzee's own) "longing for grace, for transcendence over contingency and eternal confusion," "finally a longing for authority." In *The Master of Petersburg* a kind of grace and absolution is achieved when the writer transforms his

demons into fiction, which provides an answer to the question Dostoevsky asks himself about the purpose of creativity as he contemplates writing "a book of evil": "And to what end? To liberate himself from evil or to cut himself off from good?" (Coetzee 1999: 134).

Like Coetzee himself, Coetzee's Dostoevsky is a writer of fiction in a highly politicized environment. There are obvious parallels between Dostoevsky's Russia - a country on the verge of a historical upheaval, tortured by injustice and cruelty - and the apartheid South Africa in which Coetzee lived and wrote for most of his life. As Cary Henson (1998) notices, Coetzee

> has been accused of being either reactionary or displaying complicity in the oppression of certain groups in society, and has rejected the violent and anti-intellectual revolutionary movements, choosing instead to try find an authentic voice and narrative that can fully and self-critically explore fiction's role in times of intense ideological pressure.

Like Coetzee, Dostoevsky is beset by the forces of both repression and rebellion. On the one hand, Maximov attempts to induce Dostoevsky to help track down Pavel's revolutionary friends. On the other, their leader Nechaev tries to recruit the author for service in insurgency. As Peter Hom (2002) comments, Coetzee uses Dostoevsky to express his dislike of conformity, either to the state's dictates or to the orthodoxy of opposition. Coetzee does not deny that the writer may have a "duty," but he defines it as a transcendental imperative rather than as an obligation imposed on the writer by society.

Exploring the writer's responsibility in a politically charged context, Coetzee (1992: 98-9) in his novel dramatizes the ideas formulated in his articles on South-African literature in which he speaks against "a literature in bondage, [...] unable to move from elementary relations of contestation, domination, and subjugation to the vast and complex human world that lies beyond them." According to Coetzee (1988: 3), the novel should not be seen as a supplement to history, novelistic discourse is not subordinate to and should not be "colonized by the discourse of history"; on the contrary, it should help to "show up the mythic status of history" and in this way contribute to the practice of "demythologizing history."

There is another important theme which recurs both in *Foe* and *The Master of Petersburg:* the presence of the strong woman, the female partner of the lonely male author, who takes the sexual initiative and who is both "mother and wife, nurse (in the nourishing sense as well as carer for the sick), and Venus" (Burnett 1996: 246). What is more, this strong female character - Susan in *Foe*

and Anna Sergeyevna in *The Master of Petersburg* - has the function of a Muse, who is both the goddess-wooer of the writer and the "true begetter" (Coetzee 1999: 134) of his fiction. Each of these characters projects the female role onto the male writer "using him as vessel, or conduit, for her creativity, reversing the traditional model of sexuality which projects the female as vessel for the male seed" (Burnett 1996:247). In this way Coetzee's fiction replaces the myth of the father as origin by the older myth of the mother as origin and deconstructs the traditional notion of creativity as a predominantly masculine activity. Moreover, as Paula Burnett (1996: 246) points out, Coetzee's representations of the male as passive partner

> create a model in which patriarchal guilt - the historic association of exploitative dominance with the masculine culture [...] can be alleviated. The phallus is no longer threatening; the female initiative can return the male to an innocent sexuality. The imagination haunted by images of the phallus as weapon finds in the idea of inert coitus with the muse-wooer a long-sought redemption.

In conclusion it has to be said that both in *Foe* and in *The Master of Petersburg*, Coetzee, via an intertextual strategy, focuses on the exploration of some of the darkest and most ambiguous aspects of the creative process and offers a number of disturbing metaphors to conceptualise the author and authorship. However, what finally emerges from our reading of these novels is also the idea of writing as a redemptive act, both in the private and political sense. Moreover, Coetzee subverts conventional views on the creative process and attempts to find a language and a type of narrative that can transcend traditional hierarchies.

In his works Coetzee conducts a dialogue not only with his predecessors, but also with himself as a writer. Each subsequent novel becomes a kind of metatextual commentary on his previous texts. After *Foe* and *The Master of Petersburg*, Coetzee has continued to develop his ideas on the nature of authorship in other works: he has created a fictional author character, Elizabeth Costello, in the 2003 eponymous novel; this character reappears in his novel *Slow Man* (2005) providing a discourse on the interrelationship between the literary author and his characters, between fiction and reality. The latest novel, *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), whose title and composition can be seen as a structural allusion to Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), also has a writer as the protagonist. Significantly, Coetzee's Nobel lecture (2003), delivered in the form of an enigmatic short story entitled "He and his man," is a metafictional parable which, like *Foe*, is constructed as an appropriation of *Robinson*

Crusoe and which again includes Defoe as a character. Thus, Coetzee's texts create a textual-metatextual space within which meanings are integrated and the author's views on the metaphysics of writing receive a profound and multifaceted explication.

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"The Doer is Merely a Fiction Added to the Deed: The Deed is Everything" (F. Nietzsche). Tales of "Doing Gender" in *Tipping the Velvet*

"[...] the oyster, you see, is what you might call a real queer fish. Now, a he, now a she, as quite takes its fancy. A regular morphodite!", writes Sarah Waters (2006: 51) in *Tipping the Velvet.* Such sexual flexibility of the molluscs is not just Waters's literary creation. In fact, while oysters have *separate* sexes, they may *change* their sex once or more times during their life span. Waters makes this "queer fish" a symbol of gender fluidity in *Tipping the Velvet.* Nan Astley, the main character of the novel, works in an oyster-parlour, and she is like an oyster herself. She becomes a cross-dresser. She is "now, a he, now a she, as quite takes its fancy."

Nan's cross-dressing is in the foreground of the novel to such an extent that it is unclear whether Nan Astley or cross-dressing is the main character of *Tipping the Velvet.* Although Nan often wears masculine clothes her *cross-dressing* does not signify her being *transgender*. At this point a distinction between cross-dressers and transgender people should be made. While these two categories overlap they cannot be used interchangeably. It is a well-known fact that a person who is transgender usually cross-dresses. In this case, wearing clothes of the opposite sex is an element of the transgender person's identity. This person usually feels that his/her biological sex does not correspond with his/her psyche. Thus, a female who claims that inside, in her psyche, she is really a man will try to "fight" with her femininity by wearing men's clothes. However, people cross-dress for many other reasons and then they are called "cross-dressers," not "transgender people." They may treat cross-dressing as disguise, like Achilles, who dresses up as a woman not to be forced to take part in war. Cross-dressing may also be an element of the carnival, which is a time of transgression and suspending of the laws of normativity. This is the time of breaking the boundaries, as for example wearing clothes characteristic for the opposite sex. In this case cross-dressing is a ritual and a symbolic change in behaviour, which gives people freedom to act the way they would

never do in their everyday existence. Brazil is frequently called by cross-dressers "the Promised Land" because of its carnival which is the time when "men appear in high heels, fishnet stockings, ruffle-and-lace dancehall girl outfits, with lips smeared with bright lipstick and wearing thick layered wigs" (Yarborough). Cross-dressing may also be an element of a performance. Drag queens and drag kings wear clothes of the opposite sex to entertain the audience by toying with gender stereotypes. This type of entertainment, because of its visual attractiveness, is frequently shown in films, such as: *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), *To Wong Foo Thanks for Everything* (1995), *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2000), *Split: Portrait of a Drag Queen* (1992) and many others.

Nan Astley's numerous acts of cross-dressing reveal all different shades of this phenomenon. It is her who assigns meaning to the masculine clothes she wears and when cross-dressing she plays multiple roles. Also the act of cross-dressing as the main character of the novel plays various roles: it acts as a disguise, a drag king's costume and an element of a masquerade. Constant interaction of these two main characters - Nan and cross-dressing - is a crucial element of Nan's journey of self-discovery, which begins in the Mecca of disguise, in the theatre.

At the beginning of the novel Nan's identity seems to be well-defined and she appears to be pleased with her "oyster girl existence." However, Nan's *seemingly* fixed identity gets into motion when she sees a male impersonator, Kitty Butler, performing on stage in a music hall. Afterwards, Nan begins to imitate Kitty and becomes a cross-dresser. But Nan's cross-dressing is not a mere enactment of stereotypical masculinity; Nan's cross-dressing (both on-stage and off-stage) means playing *multiple* roles: a male impersonator (a mirror reflection of her lover), a renter,[1] a kept-woman and "the angel of the house." Through cross-dressing and playing these "roles" Nan goes beyond socially accepted norms and refuses to be "culturally intelligible" (Lloyd 2007: 35). The notion of "cultural intelligibility," coined by Judith Butler, was later summarized by Lloyd (2007: 36) as a reference to "the production of a normative framework that conditions who can be recognized as a legitimate subject." This framework presupposes direct correspondence between sex, gender and sexuality, which means that a girl's gender is feminine and that she desires a man. This kind of relations exists within the "heterosexual matrix" in which gender is culturally intelligible. Any disruption in this chain of relations makes the

[1] Renter - a synonym of rentboy, a male prostitute.

subject culturally unintelligible and unable to live a "liveable life." However, seeing gender as performative challenges this heteronormative concept of gender and broadens our understanding of identity as such. Gender perfomativity allows for playing with gender by breaking the chain of relations between sex, gender and sexuality.

This is what Nan Astley does in *Tipping the Velvet.* Her life is a constant performance of a cross-dresser outside the heterosexual matrix. She opposes "girling," citing gender norms (Wolfreys 1999: 573) and she does not follow the heteronormative set of relations between sex, gender and desire. In each case of role-playing Nan breaks this chain of relations differently. Nan is constantly *performing* her gender, wearing masks and assuming identities which prove to be illusory temporary constructions. Nan's identity is *multiple* and *fragmented.* Is there anything of essence in her identity behind all the masks? This paper will discuss Nan's cross-dressing as a subversive *act* which proves gender to be performative; thus, gender is not "being" but "becoming." It will analyze the process of Nan's construction of her gender identity through constant breaking of the chain of relations between sex, gender and sexuality.

Nan's process of creating her identity begins with *imitation* of the male impersonator, Kitty. The mechanisms of this stage of her development resemble "the mirror stage" described by Jacques Lacan. Kitty embodies an ideal that Nan aspires to, the "self' she wants to become. By imitating Kitty, Nan hopes to reach this ideal so she becomes Kitty's "mirror reflection." When Nan dresses up as a boy, Kitty says:

> She looks like a boy. Which I know she's supposed to. But, if you follow me, she looks like a *real boy.* Her face and her figure and her bearing on her feet. That ain't quite the idea now, is it? (Waters 2006: 119)

This description indicates that Nan resembles a boy *too much*, which was not the desired effect. Nan has to perform masculinity in a feminine way. That is why she covers her face with make up and wears feminine shoes. Thus, it is hard to say whether Nan enacts masculinity or femininity. It appears that she acts a *girl* who acts a *boy.* Wearing masculine clothes she flutters her eyelashes and she pouts her lips. After Nan's first performance in a music hall she feels reborn and it is her point of transition into a new way of living. She says:

> I had glimpsed the truth about myself and it had left me awed and quite transformed. The truth was this: That whatever success I might achieve as a girl, they would be

> nothing compared to the triumphs I should enjoy clad, however girlishly, as a boy. I had, in short, found my vocation. (Waters 2006: 123)

Soon, she changes her surname to "King," which emphasizes the fact that being a drag king becomes an integral part of her identity. She makes a departure from "quoting" the Victorian norms to "quoting" the non-normative male impersonation. At this stage of her life cross-dressing means imitating Kitty's behavior and lifestyle. They enact masculinity together on stage, which reflects the lack of heteronormative coherence between their sex, gender and desire. They are both dressed up in masculine clothes and thus there is no coherence between their sex and gender. Moreover, they kiss each other, which shows a lack of correspondence between their sex and desire. Also the relation between gender and desire is non-normative because they are both of masculine gender in the act, so kissing they go beyond the heterosexual matrix. An additional element of gender confusion and blurring the boundaries between femininity and masculinity is the "girlishness" of the "boyishness" that both Nan and Kitty enact. This complicates the reception of their joint act. Much as they may be perceived as two men kissing on stage, their "girlishness" is visible enough to notice that they are actually two girls kissing. What is more, Nan's masculinity off-stage influences her desire for Kitty. At one point she says, "I seemed to want her more and more, further into boyishness I ventured" (Waters 2006: 124). It appears that off stage the chain of relations between sex, gender and sexuality is broken in a different way than on the stage. There is a correspondence between Nan's gender and sexuality (a masculine person desires a feminine woman) and only the relation between sex and gender is non-normative (a masculine girl).

Is Nan's life less liveable than before when she lived within the heterosexual matrix? Quite the contrary. Going beyond the norms, Nan and Kitty are in the centre of social life, admired and cheered by crowds. In this worldNan finds self-confidence, charisma and freedom of expression. Becoming a mirror reflection of the woman she loves, Nan learns to love herself. She confesses, "I had fallen in love with Kitty; now, becoming Kitty, I fell in love a little with myself' (Waters 2006: 126). However, the foundation on which Nan constructs her new self is Kitty, she is still a mere copy of her lover. "I was her foil, her echo. I was the shadow which, in all her brilliance, she cast across the stage" (Waters 2006: 127), Nan says. When Kitty betrays her, the foundation of her new, male impersonator's identity is smashed into pieces and, thus, the whole construction is shattered. All that remains are Nan's male impersonator's clothes.

After leaving Kitty and her male impersonator's profession and lifestyle, Nan perceives the life she has abandoned as "pieces of some other person's history" (Waters 2006: 184). Nan detaches herself from her former identity of a male impersonator and wants to begin a new life. After some period of recovery she goes for a walk but she discovers that she "was a solitary girl, in a city that favored sweethearts and gentlemen; a girl in a city where girls walked only to be gazed at" (Waters 2006: 191). She feels disgusted by this new life of hers. She discovers that being a lonely *girl* in London is a dreadful experience. "If only I were a boy" (Waters 2006: 191), she says to herself sadly.

But soon she reminds herself of her masculine costumes and dresses up as a man. She realizes that finally she feels secure walking down the street. Masculine clothes seem to serve as a shield protecting her from being merely an object of male gaze. Nan also indulges in being attractive for other women. When a woman says to her, "Well now, pretty boy, you look like a lively one. Fancy payin' a visit to a nice little place I know?" (Waters 2006: 194) Nan calls it "the success of that first performance" (Waters 2006: 195) and admits that it made her regain her self confidence. Again, Nan's cross-dressing proves to be a rite of passage in her life and signifies her *new role.* This time she is also a male impersonator only now her *stage* is no longer a music hall but the streets of London. Similarly to her previous role, she starts playing with her gender identity and at some point she is uncertain whether she enacts masculinity or femininity. Talking about the lady who keeps a room for her where she can change into her masculine clothes she says, "she was never quite sure if I were a girl come to her house to pull on a pair of trousers, or a boy arrived to change out of his frock. Sometimes I was not sure myself' (Waters 2006: 195). She admits that the boundaries between being a girl and "acting" a boy are blurred for her.

However, this attitude to her masculine role changes when she is mistaken for a boy by a man who offers to pay her money for having sex with him. She gives the man a positive answer and she excuses herself by claiming that her masculine disguise is part of an *act,* not her *real* self. At this point Nan seems to make a clear distinction between her *being a girl* and *playing a boy.* She confesses, "I spoke but it was as if someone else were doing the speaking, not me" (Waters 2006: 198). That is how she begins her "career" as a renter. At this stage of her life, cross-dressing appears to be a point of departure from emotional estrangement and financial crisis leading her to regained strength and independence. Cross-dressing enables Nan to create a world of illusion in which she is free to act the way she would never do in her real life; she treats her new profession as a performance, playing various male characters who are not Nan

Astley. Thus, she makes a clear distinction between *being* and *doing*. Her role of a renter is just an illusion, something that she *does*, not someone she really «. Her actions prove gender, as well as desire, to be performative. Nan enacts her masculinity so well that she is constantly treated as a boy. When she touches men she enacts the man's desire for another man. A chain of relations between sex, gender and sexuality is broken in a different way than in her previous role of the male impersonator; in the role of the renter the relation between sex and sexuality corresponds to the one prevalent in heterosexual matrix (a girl has sex with a man) but the relations between sex and gender (a girl is masculine) and gender and sexuality (a masculine person having sex with a man) are outside the heterosexual matrix. The two roles (of the male impersonator and the renter), are constructs of identity that make Nan feel reborn and transformed. But soon, Nan's new construction is again swept away.

The moment she meets Diane Letherby and becomes her kept-woman, Nan enters the world of luxury. Diane dresses Nan in expensive male clothes to make her act as Diane's "boy." When they go out together, Nan plays Diane's boyfriend. On the surface, it signifies going beyond the heterosexual matrix, because her masculine gender does not correspond to her feminine sex. However, the relation between her gender and sexuality falls into the category of heteronomativity; Diane is feminine and Nan is masculine, which makes them look like a heterosexual couple. If they went out together, both wearing dresses, they would be ostracized and called "toms," a Victorian word for lesbians. Nan's cross-dressing makes their lesbianism less noticeable. Thus, paradoxically, the non-heteronormative practice of cross-dressing is conditional to being perceived as acceptable by the heteronomative society. But is it being acceptable enough?

The role of Diane's boy is very different from the role of a renter, even though in both cases Nan cross-dresses for money. When being a renter Nan feels free and independent. Being Diane's "boy" Nan is treated like her possession. It may seem that Nan's role of a "boy" is a step backwards: from freedom to dependency. However, this new role has made an equally significant contribution to her self-development as her previous roles. After all, her enslavement is, in many respects, a juxtaposition to her past freedom, and gives Nan a new insight into her personality. Being a kept-woman she enters the unfamiliar world of complete submission. Nan discovers her ability to be compliant and yielding, which are the features perceived by Victorians as characteristics of a perfect wife. She plays a seemingly masculine role of a "boy" but she does not really enact stereotypical masculinity (existing in heteromatrix) by the way she lets

herself be treated by Diane. Soon, when she betrays Diane with their maid and is immediately ejected from Diane's house, Nan feels no regrets. This episode of her life is just another temporary construction and Nan's experimental creation which, like the previous structures, is also subject to disintegration.

After Diane ejects her, Nan becomes homeless. She resolves to find Florence, a girl she used to be attracted to before meeting Diane. Soon, she reaches Florence's house and she moves in. She starts playing another role - that of "the angel of the house." She does cleaning, cooking and babysitting. She wants to fit in her new role, so she buys herself a flowery frock which seems to be expressive of her return to "quoting" Victorian norms of femininity. However, it seems that her constant enactment of masculinity over the past few years makes this re-transformation impossible. Nan says,

> I looked extraordinarily awful. The clothes I had bought, they were the kind I'd used to wear in Whinstable. I had been known then as a handsome enough girl. But it was as if wearing gentleman's suits had magically unfitted me for girlishness, for ever - as if my jaw had grown firmer, my brows heavier, my hips slimmer and my hands extra large, to match the clothes Diana had put me in. (Waters 2006: 381)

It seems that Nan's performed masculinity has been inscribed in her body. Nan has been *doing* her gender and the result of her *deeds* is palpable. It may symbolize the superiority of *doing* compared to *being* and it may even indicate the lack of *being* as such. Nan is still playing a role ("the angel of the house") but this is the only role which is not inextricably linked with cross-dressing. In this role, Nan has freedom to make a choice whether she wants to wear feminine or masculine clothes. Nan eventually decides to cross-dress but her masculinity is no longer an imitation or illusion. This is the role she identifies with; she "collects" multiple fragments of her identity coming from her previous roles and incorporates them into her new role. Her past constructs of identity may signify "the journeying consciousness on its way to absolute knowledge described by Hegel" (Lloyd 2007: 15). The "absolute knowledge" is obviously never achieved. What is achieved? Is it "liveability"? It is more than that; not "liveability" but multiplicity, not constancy but fluidity, not regularity but many different irregularities.

Sarah Waters tells a story of a constant performance of a cross-dresser and a constant performance of cross-dresser's clothes. Both these characters lack the essential identity as they both constantly change their roles. While masculine clothes are supposed to play the role of stereotypical masculinity they fail to do so. Gentleman's suits enable Nan to act as a kept-woman and "the angel of the

house," which are typically feminine roles. It is Nan who assigns the meaning to her garments, not the other way round. Thus, we may ask the question: how can masculine clothes indicate the essential gender identity (masculinity) if they lack this essence themselves? When they hang on a hanger they may have this "essence," but when being worn by a person they not only transform this person, but they are also transformed by him/her. Thus, Nan and her garments create a unity the nature of which changes in various stages of her life.

Before Nan fell in love with Florence her roles were illusory temporary constructions. She was a performer, a "doer" devoid of fixed gender identity, which is illustrated by Nietzsche's sentence later quoted by Judith Butler, "The doer is merely a fiction added to the deed, the deed is everything" (Nietzsche qtd in Butler 2006: 53). Each of Nan's roles seems to be just "a fiction added to the deed." She assumes the masculine gender role and enacts it. What is more, her enactment of masculinity is often done in a feminine way so her boyishness and girlishness merge. Nan is "once a she and once a he, as quite takes it fancy." Her gender identity is subject to constant transformation, not *being* but *becoming.* The roles appear in her life in the sequence of contradictions; Nan's life of a male impersonator is connected with emotional dependence on Kitty, which is later contrasted with her independence as a renter; the freedom of a renter is juxtaposed with her enslavement as a kept-woman, which is finally set against her regained freedom as "an angel of the house." All Nan's roles prove to be subversive acts questioning gender norms generated by the heterosexual matrix. She makes an attempt to go beyond a strict feminine vs. masculine division and to find her own way of living in which the boundary between femininity and masculinity is blurred. Cross-dressed, she explores various worlds, both outside and within herself. She is the "doer," the agent; she actively shapes her identity. Through the oscillation between the two polarities, between construction and demolishing, she realizes what kind of self she wants to create. It is both "a he" and "a she."

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"Need Keeps the Book of Dying Open": Negative Capability in Gil Ott's *The Whole Note*

I have adopted Keats' famous term in the title of this paper, because it feels like an answer to the conference theme of "Ambiguity and the Search for Meaning." Keats' definition of *negative capability* as: "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Keats 1965: 53), seems to simultaneously refuse the search for meaning whilst potentially embracing ambiguity. However, what does negative capability actually look like? I want to examine Gil Ott's book *The Whole Note* as a way of exploring this question, as negative capability seems part of its very fabric. Ott suffered from kidney disease for most of his life, undergoing numerous failed transplant operations, and died at the age of fifty four. I wish to read *The Whole Note* as a meditation on death and dying, noting in particular how the book, through its arresting formal procedures, seems to argue for a resistance to the final closure of meaning that death metaphorically and perhaps literally presents.

Gil Ott (1950-2004) was an American poet, writer and publisher associated with the Language Poetry movement. His journal *Paper Air* (1976-1990) first published Charles Bernstein's famous verse-essay "Artifice of Absorption" and his small press Singing Horse (still extant) has published important figures such as Rae Armantrout, David Antin and Rosmarie Waldrop. He worked at The Painted Bride Arts Centre in Philadelphia for almost twenty years - a grass-roots arts and community organisation. He published thirteen books including *The Yellow Floor* (Sun & Moon, 1985), *Within Range* (Burning Deck, 1987), *Public Domain* (Potes & Poets, 1989), *The Whole Note* (Zasterle, 1996), and *Traffic* (Chax Press, 2001).

The Whole Note is a sequence of thirty-two prose poems arranged into four sections of eight poems each. The book uses experimental techniques associated with the Language Poets, such as ambiguity, discontinuity and non-standard syntax. The density of the book resists attempts to paraphrase its argument as it moves from poem to poem. By making extensive use of non-sequiturs, the inner structure of each poem also refuses easy summary or closure. However, despite

this difficulty, the book does offer recurring ideas or motifs: observations of the natural world (largely drawn from California where three quarters of the poem was written); reflections on poetics; images of relationships; the details of decay, pain and illness; accounts of the rituals of other cultures; thoughts about identity; the activities of walking and breathing.

What I hope to illustrate here is the highly suggestive movement of meaning and syntax in Ott's writing. Each sentence reads like an independent entity, and although this is by no means a unique effect in the history of the prose poem, Ott's subtle handling of syntax gives an effect of an over-determined semantic territory which requires extensive re-reading in order to establish continuities and discontinuities of argument and idea. The use of ambiguity and puns, leading to an impression of a subtle, critical irony at work, and the fact that the book's themes are not overtly declared, analysed, explained or framed from the ordering perspective of a self-conscious narrator's voice, offers the reader the possibility of a heightened engagement with the poem as language and form. As Ott (2001: 8) wrote in the preface to his 2001 volume *Traffic*.

> I have always felt that the challenge in reading poetry is equal to or greater than that of writing it. The "poet" is not so much the one who composes or delivers the work, nor the one who reads and interprets, but the mutual establishment of all of these.

In my engagement with Ott's work I am made aware of the book's artifice as integral to what it offers as argument: it proceeds as much by its attitude to form as by theme, and this makes the process of interpretation highly visible.

Ott's statement of poetics in the preface to *Traffic* is apt for discussing his approach in *The Whole Note.* He describes *Traffic* as adhering to "no unifying theme of narrative development" (Ott 2001: 7) and links this to a view of the world in which

> It would seem to be a universal human desire to believe in the face of all contravening evidence and the complexity of the present moment, in a stable world, near at hand.
>
> (Ott 2001: 8-9)

Ott's postmodern critique here reveals his own commitment to negative capability, one that leads to a kind of radically open-ended writing that acknowledges this contingency and complexity in its structure. Several parts of *The Whole Note* are readable as self-reflexive statements of this poetics.

The statement “First to write them, then get to know the less and less form assuming” (Ott 1996: 13[1]) suggests an open-ended, exploratory process of composition wherein writing is the primary act followed by getting to know what has been done, not unlike Jean-François Lyotard’s famous formulation “The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done"* (1984: 81). Paradoxically, what is written then seems to assume form less and less, rather than more. Elsewhere the limits of writing are acknowledged in statements such as “I take time writer to sit, remove you to whom magnified parceling you out teases alterity” (Ott 1996: 23). Here Ott uses a cross-word pun where “time writer” suggests typewriter. If writing here is an act of “magnified parceling you out” - a kind of representation that magnifies and isolates aspects of a person - then the fact that it “teases alterity” suggests ambiguously both the power of writing to overcome otherness, but that it may also be simply in thrall to otherness. Ott (1996: 28) also characterises writing as an endlessly self-reflexive process “the inventing looking for itself [...] acting out me, the author” which debates the role of form as enabling or otherwise: “feeling the constraints form imposed” (1996: 33) versus “free of constraint” (1996: 39).

The Whole Note figures the activities of writing, breathing and walking as equivalent ways in which we persist, keep going and make our identities in the face of decay and death. That all these activities can in some way be thought of as different kinds of meditation, that is, attention to the present moment, fits with Ott’s insistence on the importance of the present in the preface to *Traffic:* “Past and future are essentially fictions, [...] Language, the act, is present” (2001: 9). Whilst this accounts for the lack of narrative continuity in *The Whole Note*, Ott (2001: 7) also acknowledges that his collection nevertheless does have a kind of unity:

> By the natural force of the mind making whole, however, the collection [...] has found its unity, not so much in its form as in the chunk of time that it has come to occupy.

Ott’s sense of time as something experienced “in a multitude of ways, from the ephemeral to the immovable” with his focus on the more “solid experience of time” that “spreads and covers all of existence” (Ott 2001: 8) finds its analogue

[1] The text of *The Whole Note* is unpaginated. References are therefore counted from the title page.

in Deleuze's (2000 [1964]: 129-130) account of time in Proust in his 1964 book *Proust and Signs:*

> Time, ultimate interpreter, ultimate act of interpretation, has the strange power to affirm simultaneously fragments that do not constitute a whole in space, any more than they form a whole by succession within time.

Deleuze (2000: 163) recuperates the idea of multiplicity as a kind of unity, looking for a "unity of this very multiplicity [...] a whole of just these fragments." This leads him to rewrite, or co-write with Proust, an evocation of Balzac's style, or rather "nonstyle:"

> The fragments of silence and of speech, what he says and what he does not say, are distributed in a fragmentation that the whole ultimately confirms because it results from it, rather than corrects or transcends. (Deleuze 2000: 165)

This tension between a sense of wholeness and fragmentation is illuminating of Ott's poetics in *The Whole Note*, even exposing the pun on w/hole in the title - which is argued with in the poem by the statement "resistance turns a minor note" (Ott 1996: 26). Crucially for what I read as Ott's concern with mortality in *The Whole Note*, Deleuze (2000: 157) makes an explicit link between time's capability to affirm wholes out of fragments with that of the idea of death itself:

> *The idea of death* as uniformly imbuing all fragments, carrying them toward a universal end.

For Deleuze (2000: 158), the idea of death "consists of a certain effect of Time" and its effect is less a kind of closure than of a mixing up, as dying is a process that is also carried on by the living. Deleuze (2000: 159) argues that the idea of death "ceases to be an 'objection' provided we can attach it to an order of production, thus giving it its place in the work of art." As is Proust's theme in the masked ball scene of *Finding Time Again*, it is through the decay of the human body that time, normally invisible, becomes visible. Such a poetics seems to underwrite Ott's concern with the decay of the body and the fact of dying as a means of engaging truth. As Deleuze (2000: 160) puts it "it is the nature of truth [...] to be produced as an effect of time" and that "loss having then passed into the work" becomes "the condition of its form."

Proust's use of the walks of the Meseglise Way and of the Guermantes Way as figures for this kind of unity of fragments disclosed by truth, time, and death, find their analogue in Ott's almost central concern with walking - especially walking characterised as a painful act. Walking is life-affirming as it

also reminds one of mortality, it is an act of poetics, of self-making in the face of uncertainty and the ever-present threat of loss.

The Whole Note actually begins and ends with the act of walking; the first poem ends "I walk away" and the final poem ends "I will walk away." Walking is figured as wandering in many poems, a choice word with its pun on *wondering*, and constructed as an active "purposeful" (Ott 1996: 16) image for resistance to ageing: "find one wandering plans to interrupt decay" (Ott 1996: 10), despite it also being a source of pain: "piled on every bone felt" (Ott 1996: 40), "dark walk on leaked blood" (Ott 1996: 42). Towards the end of the first section of the book the following passage unfolds a more extended meditation:

> Try my arms, the height of my hips' measure to sap
>
> sentences lacking subject, predicate, equilibrium, a pace implies home, identity, mine determined to undermine a diagram. Heel to ball. Forward heedless of the intrusion on purview, compromised. (Ott 1996: 11)

Here the narrator appears to be making a dis/connection between his physical integrity "try my arms [...] my hips" and that of his poem "sentences lacking subject, predicate, equilibrium." The verb "sap" occupies an ambiguous ground in its position at the end of a paragraph break; it might mean the test of the "hips' measure" is in the "sap" as a kind of life-force, or it could mean that the body's state "saps" or drains the sentences of the poem. That a connection can be made between the body and the open textual strategies of the poem seems crucial and leads to the consideration that "a pace implies home, identity" as if the very act of walking guarantees a kind of personal, social integrity. That Ott's poetics so far would lead us to treat such an end with some suspicion however is borne out subtly in the highly patterned phrase: "mine determined to undermine a diagram." If the narrator refers to his own identity here, it may be something to value that the unconventional "measure" of his body and his writing seeks to question the normative certainties of existence in a postmodern fashion. The act of walking is again noted in a concrete image of "heel to ball," isolated in a single short sentence. However, the immediately following sentence: "forward heedless of the intrusion on purview, compromised" seems to reiterate a postmodern critique of a forward marching that is unaware of being under surveillance and compromised. Thus Ott's utilization of the figure of walking is multivalent in meaning and is not straightforwardly redemptive, at least not in the terms of the radical politics that Ott's radical poetics seems to hint at.

As the book enters the end game of the final section, the tessellation of the themes of embodiment, selfhood, writing and mortality gathers in density. Ott makes the declaration that gives this paper its title: "Need keeps the book of dying open, the language common after all." If the idea of death, as constructed by Deleuze, uniformly imbues the fragmented texture of Ott's book, Ott seems to articulate a need for this contingency to remain open, a sort of w-hol(e)(y) unity that resembles negative capability. That this need is articulated in terms of the book and of language seems to make the act of attaching death to an order of production - that is, as Deleuze sees in Proust, to art - a recuperative, even redemptive one. Ott, with his background in leftist politics, seems to see the implications of thinking of death as a common language as an emblem of the human commons; our universal destiny, which, in order to remain ethically open to our freedom, also remains a necessarily unknown end.

In the penultimate poem Ott seems to acknowledge this active uncertainty of living and links it again to the act of walking, whereby the word*feet* decisively becomes a pun on the word as it is used in prosody:

> Dispassionate grace the water's edge
>
> reach to what hypothesis uncertainty led the spirit. Still, moving, speaking, incomprehensible. Feet set in mud, decayed, and other feet
>
> tirelessly composed. (Ott 1996: 42)

The role of uncertainty here as something that leads the spirit to hypothesize about its fate seems crucial, even if it leads to a kind of bathos in which the use of punctuation allows "still" to pun on its two senses in relation to both moving and speaking: now side by side, but incomprehensible. This seems quite like a Beckettian end game in which, although feet are set in mud, other feet, whether they be metrical or not, are tirelessly composed into being, or simply rest with energised composure. That Ott keeps the options open here, even in the face of extremity, seems to reveal a commitment to negative capability that underwrites his whole project.

In a book driven by the conjunction of death, truth and time, the last poem announces itself as "a formal end only" that "blurred with or without morphine decides to live" (Ott 1996:43). The suggestion that if the book ends the narrator will continue, rather chillingly implies that a choice was made to go on. The narrator acknowledges:

> I have made a mistake a meandering
>
> stasis, down a notch and starting over. Someone else's surgery pulled a knot out, left a man handled roughly bumped and thrown what dirt brackets. (Ott 1996: 43)

Here, the act of meandering is identified as stasis, although the phrases "down a notch and starting over" imply a slowing down and a new beginning. The next sentence contains what can be read as a rather brutal description of the surgical procedures Ott was subject to as part of his battle with kidney disease and suggests a certain bitterness about the way in which he was treated. The concluding lines of the book however suggest a resolution:

> I will build a body of utterance, that fooled me. The odor will stay, and I
>
> will walk away. (Ott 1996: 43)

That the narrator undertakes to build a "body of utterance" is a perfect figure for the link between writing and mortality articulated throughout the book, and hints at the notion of the complete works of a poet as inevitably a posthumous achievement. That the narrator adds ironically "that fooled me" suggests an ongoing resistance to closure, that even the body of utterance is not to be trusted as a completed artifact, surrendering its subject whole and intact. That Ott seeks an ongoing tension with closure is memorably encapsulated in the final statement. If odor is the odor of a dead body, then, once death comes, the narrator is already somewhere else.[2] In this isolated, tightly alliterative closing phrase, the word "will" sounds almost emphatic. If this signals the actual end of the book, its final image - echoing its opening - is resistant and in defiance of that closure. This resistance is its rationale in its "search for meaning" in the face of death and constitutes a profound example of negative capability.

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[2] As Irvin Yalom quotes Epicurus: "Where death is, I am not" (Yalom 2008: 177).

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The Poetry of Seamus Heaney and the Ambiguous Politics of the Ceasefire

Just a few days after the IRA ceasefire was announced on 31 August 1994, Seamus Heaney *(Sunday Tribune,* 4 September 2004) wrote a short article for the Dublin *Sunday Tribune.* It begins in a very positive mood: "The announcement by the Provisional IRA last Wednesday changed everything for the better." The effect of that announcement, he says, was like having a blind lifted in his head:

> I went outside to try to re-collect myself and suddenly a blind seemed to rise somewhere at the back of my mind and the light came flooding in. I felt twenty-five years younger. I remembered what things had felt like in those early days of political ferment in the late sixties.

But that feeling of being "freed up," as Heaney puts it, turns to anger as he ponders twenty-five years of suffering that have brought the situation to a point that is actually less politically promising than things were in 1968. Even so, the tentative optimism encouraged by the ceasefire is evident a little later in Heaney's Nobel Prize speech in 1995, in which he speaks of "acts of faith" around the world that "inspire a hope that a new possibility can still open up in Ireland as well" (1998: 460-1).

With the exception of Edna Longley's sobering essay, "Northern Irish Poetry and the End of History" (2000: 280), very little attention has been paid to the ways in which writers in Northern Ireland have responded to the peace process. Longley is well used to journalists from abroad asking writers in Belfast, "What are you going to write about now?" "One reply," she suggests, is that poetry "had never depended either on one theme or on one orchestration of that theme." Even so, some crucially important questions need to be addressed about the perceived change of political climate registered in the recent poetry of writers like Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Ciaran Carson and Paul Muldoon. Edna Longley's own incisive readings of works produced by these poets since 1994 suggest that "the collective script might be changing," even though she remains wary of simple formulations such as "post-ceasefire literature" (2000: 315). The various interruptions and deadlocks and the general intransigence of

the peace process have tended to undermine the initial promise and hopefulness of 1994, but the possibility of substantial political progress in a more peaceful domain has prompted reflections and imaginings that seem to indicate a new poetic consciousness. One manifestation of this is an impulse among poets (especially Seamus Heaney) to revisit and revise their own creative achievements. Edna Longley (2000: 316) notes "the accentuated tendency for poets to quote and revise not only earlier poets and each other but also their former textual selves." In terms of a distinctive preoccupation with memory, forgiveness and reconciliation, and in terms of a sustained intertextual experimentation, it might be argued that there is a significant body of writing that is "post-ceasefire" in more than just the obvious chronological sense.

The image of light flooding into Seamus Heaney's poems is anticipated, of course, in a good deal of his writing prior to 1994. This is especially true of the poems in *Seeing Things*, published in 1991, in which Heaney turns away from a "poetry sluggish in the doldrums of what happens," towards the visionary mode suggested by the title of the volume. In the poem "Fosterling," he writes of "waiting until I was nearly fifty / To credit marvels. Like the tree-clock of tin cans / The tinkers made. So long for air to brighten, / Time to be dazzled and the heart to lighten" (1991: 50). There is no doubt that Heaney's work has recently come out into the light and that it has started to shed the heavy layers of discomfort that have been there since the early 1970s. For Heaney's detractors, of course, this apparent lightening does not really matter. His poetry, they would have us believe, has always been supremely evasive of the actual stuff of politics, encrypting it in Celtic and Norse mythology and presenting it with such serene even-handedness and subtle obliquity as to say very little at all. The title of Heaney's poem, "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing," has frequently been turned back on him with an accusing stare. To appreciate fully the recent lightening in Heaney's work, and the extent to which it has been a matter of intense creative struggle, we need to recall those moments of darkness and near-despair that made the title of his 1969 book *Door into the Dark* seem ironically prophetic. We need to remember, too, those occasions on which Heaney has been moved to speak out forcefully against the British media, the British government and the British army.

In March 1988, Heaney was invited to London to receive the *Sunday Times* award for excellence in writing. He used what might otherwise have been a pleasantly emollient occasion to express his deep dismay at the British media coverage of events in Northern Ireland, which threatened to undermine recent attempts to establish an Anglo-Irish political agreement:

> I noticed in yesterday's newspapers an inclination to view the British army presence in Ulster once again as part of the solution rather than part of the problem, an inclination to view them as hygienic, rubber-gloved, impersonally motivated technicians operating in polluted ghettoes where indigenous hatreds are cultured in self-induced and self-wounding conditions. I noticed an inclination to think of military funerals as a tribal and undesirable form of solidarity when enacted on the Falls Road, but as somehow immunised against tribal significance when the victims were British soldiers, the mourners were British parents, and the martial music was relayed with deeply emotive effect by the news channels of British television.
>
> (Heaney 1989: 14)

Heaney's bold and uncompromising stance on this occasion was informed by Robert Lowell's assertion that "every serious artist knows that he cannot enjoy public celebration without making subtle public commitments," (qtd. in *Time* 11 June, 1965) but the example of Yeats was also in his mind: "Yeats's challenge to the writer was to hold in a single thought reality and justice, and the same challenge is in effect in Westminster and Fleet Street" (1989: 14). We cannot embark upon a worthwhile appraisal of Heaney's post-ceasfire writings without giving adequate measure to the gravity and seriousness that weigh upon his earlier writings, and without taking into account what he memorably characterises elsewhere as his own "responsible traZza" (1998: 43). That *tristia* is gently self-ironising, but it adequately points to a pervasive mood and a sense of moral obligation that persist in Heaney's work over a period of some twenty years.

Heaney's 1993 lecture, "Frontiers of Writing" (the closing piece in *The Redress of Poetry),* recalls an Oxford college dinner that took place a week after the death of Bobby Sands, on the same day that another hunger striker, the son of a neighbouring family of the Heaneys in Co. Derry, was being buried. As the poet circulates among the sherry-sipping crowd, he thinks of a very different crowd in a small house, close to home, where a funeral is taking place. He recognises acutely a "moment of conflicting recognitions, self-division, inner quarrel, a moment of dumbness and inadequacy when it felt like a betrayal to be enjoying the hospitality of an Establishment college and occupying, if only accidentally, the room of a British minister." What he experiences at that moment is "the classic bind of all of Northern Ireland's constitutional nationalists," caught between "commitments to cultural and political ideals which are fundamentally Ireland-centred" and "their disavowal of support for the violent means of the Irish Republican Army, an army which operates with pre-emptive and atrocious force in order to further similar cultural and political ideals." Heaney's acknowledgement of the "frontier" and its political, as well

as imaginative, consequences is candid but also unflinchingly forthright: "But whether the north and the south are to be regarded as monolithic or pluralist entities, the fact of the border, of partition, of two Irelands on one island, remains the salient fact" (1995: 188-9). There are other occasions on which Heaney has made his political sympathies and attachments explicit, and his prose writings have been scrupulously frank about their own aesthetic and ideological procedures. To understand the complex shifts that have taken place in Heaney's writings since the ceasefire, however, we need to go back even further to 1972.

In an essay titled "1972" and published in the *Guardian* that year, Heaney asks how poetry can come to terms with the violence and brutality of the times. He ponders these lines from Shakespeare's Sonnet 65: "How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea / Whose action is no stronger than a flower?" (1980: 33). In a later essay in 1974, Heaney (1980: 57) answers that question with the help of Yeats. What he must do, as Yeats does in his "Meditations in Time of Civil War," is to find "befitting emblems of adversity": images and symbols that are somehow adequate to the predicament. Those emblems of adversity have steadily given way to emblems of reconciliation and renewal in recent times, but their force and significance are still apparent in Heaney's most recent poems.

The most striking emblems of adversity in the 1970s can be found in the Bog Poems of *Wintering Out* and *North*, in which Heaney establishes a parallel between the sectarian killings going on in his own north and the ritual sacrifices to Mother Earth in the early Iron Age culture across northern Europe. The source for this pervasive anthropological interest was P. V. Glob's illustrated book, *The Bog People*, published in English in 1969. Heaney (1980: 57-8) writes that "the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles." Among the first of the bog poems to be written was "The Tollund Man," which begins with the announcement of a pilgrimage, a desire to visit the peat bogs of Jutland: "Some day I will go to Aarhus." The most striking aspect of this and other bog poems is the strange fusing of Christian and pagan ritual. In the third stanza, the meditative line, "I will stand a long time," suggests a veneration and a reverence usually reserved for the Stations of the Cross, and the second section of the poem explicitly acknowledges that to pray to a pagan saint is to "risk blasphemy." The closing stanza of the poem recognises the paradox of internal exile, of being an inner émigré: "Out there in Jutland / In the old man-killing parishes /1 will feel lost, / Unhappy and at home" (1998: 65).

One of the first poems to be written by Heaney after the announcement of the ceasefire at the end of August 1994 was "Tollund," the penultimate poem in Heaney's 1996 book, *The Spirit Level.* The poem is dated September 1994, as if announcing its presence in a new political dispensation. At the same time, it looks back at "The Tollund Man," gently suggesting a changed world view in its delicate verbal echoes of the earlier poem. As the new title suggests, the focus now is less on the fossilised sacrificial object than on the broader prospect of the place itself, with its promising "path through Jutland fields." The penitential journey envisaged in the earlier poem has now been undertaken; but most importantly, the speaker's solitary and uncertain veneration in "The Tollund Man" ("I will stand a long time") now gives way to a sense of shared destiny and communion: "That Sunday morning we had travelled far. / We stood a long time out in Tollund Moss" (1998: 443). The familiar yet "hallucinatory" quality of the place prepares us for the prospect of "seeing things," for the possibility of the miraculous.

One way in which Heaney is prompted to see a bright utopian vision is through a subtle recall of "Townland of Peace," part of a sequence titled "Freehold," written in the 1940s by the Ulster regionalist poet, John Hewitt: "It could have been a still out of the bright / 'Townland of Peace', that poem of dream farms / Outside all contention" (1998: 443). In "The Tollund Man," Heaney had established a parallel between ancient Jutland and the "old man-killing parishes" of his own homeland. Now, he establishes a different parallel between the quiet pastoral of the Jutland fields and Hewitt's wartime regional idyll, in which the poet imagines stepping "clean out of Europe into peace." As Edna Longley (2000: 307) suggests, '"Townland of Peace' may have come into Heaney's mind because its images distinguish peace from war so simply and clearly, and because it explains how wartime circumstances stimulated the visionary new history for 'Ulster ... my region' that emerges later in 'Freehold.'" At the same time, Heaney's new vision of "Tollund" is one that is open to change and modernisation. His pastoral setting admits "Light traffic sound," and the generously embracing image of a scarecrow with its arms open is strategically aligned with a satellite dish in a nearby paddock. A standing stone has been "resituated and landscaped," and the speaker who once felt lost among foreign names now discovers "tourist signs in *futhark* runic script / In Danish and in English." All the signs suggest that "Things had moved on" (1998: 443).

The earlier negative identification that Heaney articulates in "The Tollund Man," feeling "lost, / Unhappy and at home," now gives way to a more easeful and open sense of being "at home beyond the tribe." The dejected solitariness

of the earlier poem is replaced with a more positive sense of companionship and shared endeavour:

> More scouts than strangers, ghosts who'd walked abroad
> Unfazed by light, to make a new beginning.
> And make a go of it, alive and sinning,
> Ourselves again, free-willed again, not bad. (1998: 443)

The image of ghosts is momentarily unsettling, since the haunted present usually signifies the troubled legacy of the past, but the facing of the light is a positive indication of a new start and a new determination to go forward, unconstrained by the narrow moral and religious dictates that have previously hindered progress. The willingness to take risks in the interests of change has a formal corollary in Heaney's readiness to employ the rhythms of living speech: "make a go of it [...] not bad" (1998:443). Edna Longley (2000:309) notes that the phrase "Ourselves again" appears to conflate the familiar translation of *Sinn Fein* ("ourselves alone") with the famous Irish ballad, "A Nation Once Again," and she concludes: "Perhaps it is fitting that subtextual irresolution should characterise an 'end' that cannot yet generate the language, the tropes and modes, for 'a new beginning.'" Andrew Murphy (1996: 103), however, offers a more optimistic reading of these closing lines, noting that "By cancelling the 'alone' and replacing it with 'again,' Heaney suggests a kind of rebirth of Irishness and a breaking of traditional isolationist introversion." The closing colloquial summation, "not bad," is just deflationary enough to caution against wild expectations; it suggests a reasonable start, but it also invites a more generous estimation of human kindness and potential than had previously prevailed.

The most remarkable manifestation of the Tollund Man in recent times, however, has been in "The Tollund Man in Springtime," a sonnet sequence included in *District and Circle* (2006). As the title of the sequence suggests, the longed-for germination that Heaney sought in *Wintering Out* has now come about and the Tollund Man walks abroad in the rapidly changing contemporary world. The new global order that he inhabits is one in which terrorism is a persistent and widespread concern, and in which new technology drives the increasing need for surveillance. If this seems like a disappointing, dystopian end to all that was hoped for in the earlier poem - as if the violence and terror at the local level have now assumed a worldwide presence - there is also an abiding hope and determination. The persistence of the Tollund Man testifies to the survival and persistence of poetry itself, and now the Tollund Man speaks in his own voice, with a new-found sense of liberation:

Into your virtual city I'll have passed
Unregistered by scans, screens, hidden eyes,
Lapping myself in time, an absorbed face
Coming and going, neither god nor ghost... (2006: 53)

The strong sense of endurance and fortitude that informs the poem derives in part from the anti-totalitarian vision of Heaney's friend and fellow poet, Czeslaw Milosz, who died in August 2004: "The soul exceeds its circumstances." The presence of the Polish poet reinforces the impression that "The Tollund Man in Springtime" is a celebration of poetry's "staying powers." By the end of the sequence, it seems as if poet and Tollund Man have merged and become one. If the title *District and Circle* brings to mind the London Underground and the hellish circumstances of the terrorist bombings in July 2005, it also suggests Heaney's continuing preoccupation with his own district and his relentless circling back on his own poetic achievements. There is resilience and endurance in the figure of the turf cutter with which the sequence ends: "I straightened, spat on my hands, felt benefit / And spirited myself into the street" (2006: 58).

Stylistically, too, "The Tollund Man in Springtime" registers a changed world view. For all the deep-seated anxieties that attend the prospect of globalised terror, there is a lightness and deftness in Heaney's handling of the sonnet form. The syntactical fluency and rhythmic buoyancy of the sonnets suggest a recovery of confidence in the lyric mode. In the opening sonnet, for instance, the Petrarchan rhyme scheme is established with an easeful and artful simplicity, allowing words like "passed" and "ghost," "lost" and "rust," to function as near-echoes of each other, rather than as full-throated rhymes. This sustained experimentation with lyric form takes on a new confidence and adventurousness in the changed political climate of the post-ceasefire period. Between 1972 and 1994, between "The Tollund Man" and "Tollund," Heaney had continued to think about the function of poetry, and about whether lyric poetry, in particular, was adequate to the circumstances in which it now had to operate. One of the most revealing instances of Heaney's theoretical manouevering can be found in the Richard Ellmann Lectures which he delivered at Emory University in Atlanta in 1988, and which were subsequently printed in a small book titled *The Place of Writing* (1989). In these lectures, Heaney (1989: 38) confesses just how difficult it is to carry on writing in a cultural climate where a suspicion of Yeatsian heroics combines with a more general European scepticism about the possibilities of poetry after Auschwitz:

> it all added up to a situation in which the literary intelligentsia of Britain and Ireland were anxious to confine the operations of imaginative writing to a sanitized realm that might include the ludic, the ironic, the parodic, the satiric, the pathetic, the domestic, the elegiac and the self-inculpatory, but which would conscientiously exclude the visionary prophetic, the patriotic witness, the national epical.

In Heaney's own work, of course, there are many instances of the domestic, the elegiac and the self-inculpatory, but rather less attention has been given to the visionary prophetic, the patriotic witness and the national epical, all of which are also abundantly present in Heaney's work, and which arguably begin to surface more confidently and explicitly in the poetry written after the ceasefire of 1994. The references to "the ludic, the ironic, the parodic" derive in part from the preface to *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, edited by Andrew Motion and Blake Morrison, in which Heaney (somewhat reluctantly) had been included in 1982. It suggests the kind of poetry then being written by Paul Muldoon, a poetry that was advertising itself as postmodern in its self-reflexive, allusive, deconstructive energies. Just a little later in the essay, Heaney (1989: 41) takes Muldoon to task for seeming to "deride the notion that poetry might have a desirable, never mind a demonstrable, relation to the life of a nation. To get involved with such ideas, he [Muldoon] implies, is at best to commit a literary offence, at worst to promote dubious mystiques involving race memory and the chosen people complex." How, then, to steer a line between patriotic witness and the kind of postmodem playfulness that would seem to abandon any serious commitment to the life of the nation? Heaney has always tried to balance the place of writing in terms of a particular national location with the place of writing in terms of where it exists, theoretically, in relation to other cultural activities and events.

Three poems written by Heaney over a period of thirty years, all of them preoccupied with a particular place - Toome, in Co. Antrim - suggest how pervasive and persistent Heaney's ideas about the "place of writing" have been throughout his career. All three poems give voice to the urge and necessity of poetry itself, but also reveal distinctive stages of development in Heaney's thinking about the adequacy of his own artistic impulses. The first of these poems, simply titled "Toome," appeared in *Wintering Out* in 1972. It is one of a number of sensuous verbal realisations of local places, including "Anahorish" and "Broagh," in which Heaney taps a long Irish tradition of placename poems *(dinnseanchas)* and attempts to recover "forgotten Gaelic music in the throat": "My mouth holds round / the soft blastings, / *Toome, Toome."* At

a phonetic level, the poem is an exploration of the distinctive music of Gaelic vowel sounds; it exerts a sense of kinship and perhaps a sense of possession in the mouth's prolonged "holding" to the soundings of the place. As Heaney suggests in his early essays, however, linguistic contours are also geo-political contours. Toome is part of the Bann valley, a site of important archaeological discoveries (and therefore an appropriate place for poetic excavations involving language and memory), but it is also associated with the 1798 Rebellion, and especially with the folk memory, preserved in Ethna Carbery's song, of the rebel Roddy McCorley: "For young Roddy McCorley goes to die on the Bridge of Toome today" (Regan 2004: 367). The "soft blastings" of *Toome* open up the poem's excavation of the landscape, while subtly hinting at its troubled political history. Heaney's poetic "prospecting" uncovers, instead of gold, an assortment of objects, including "musket-balls." The final prospect is a place of danger, where the speaker acknowledges the risks that accompany his archaeological excavations: "I am sleeved in / alluvial mud that shelves / suddenly under / bogwater and tributaries, / and elvers tail my hair" (1998: 53). That final image is a Celtic version of the Medusa myth that suggests that Heaney has pushed back well beyond the 1790s into pagan Ireland. If it provides evidence that Heaney has "located his primeval, preliterate self," it also reminds us of the fossilising, petrifying consequences of looking too intently into the past (Morrison 1982: 44).

"The Toome Road" provides a striking indication of the colloquial vigour and directness that started to enter Heaney's work between *Wintering Out* in 1972 and *Field Work* in 1979. That stylistic shift is immediately apparent in the poem's opening recollection of a meeting with the British Army:

> One morning early I met armoured cars
> In convoy, warbling along on powerful tyres,
> All camouflaged with broken alder branches,
> And headphoned soldiers standing up in turrets. (1998: 150)

The echoes of English folk song ("Early one morning, just as the sun was rising") are quickly dispelled, and the image of a singing maiden is displaced by military hardware. In its surveillance of rural Ulster, the army also appears to have displaced the birds and even the trees in which they sing. The broken alder, the darling tree of the exiled Sweeney, is an ominous sign. In Heaney's version of *Buile Suibhne (Sweeney Astray*, 1983), the alder has "some milk of human kindness / coursing in its sap" (1983: 37), but here that innocence has been destroyed. The voice of the poem modulates in response to the perceived

invasion, asserting territorial rights: "How long were they approaching down my roads / As if they owned them?" (1998: 150). If the voice is that of a local farmer, it is also the oracular voice of the poet, speaking with the full authority of the author, through and on behalf of the community, and emulating the defiant idiom of Yeats's "Meditations in Time of Civil War."

Even as the conceit of the military convoy as a grotesque debasement of nature is extended, the poem refuses to conceal its violent actuality. If the occupants of the armoured cars are "Sowers of seed," they are also "erectors of headstones." The lyrical address, "O charioteers," is strangely anachronistic, but its function is to expose rather than obscure political power. As Neil Corcoran (1986: 134) points out, "the British soldiers become, briefly, continuous with the forces of the Roman imperium." That backward historical look might seem to deflect from the urgent needs of the moment, but it nevertheless presents the British army as an aggressive, occupying presence. The poem gathers to a climax as it sets against the passing image of violence an enduring image of artistic inspiration: "The invisible, untoppled omphalos." The Greek omphalos is a crucially important word in Heaney's lexicon, as it is in that of James Joyce. It appears as the first word in the opening essay of Heaney's first collection of essays, *Preoccupations*, associating the navel and the centre of the world with the sound of water being pumped in the yard of the farm where he grew up in Co. Derry. The claim that it "stands here still, stands vibrant as you pass" is a defiant recognition of art's resistance to brutal pressures, and a bold acknowledgement of all that poetry stands for.

From the outset, the poet's imagination has set the assuaging rhythms of water being pumped in the yard - *"omphalos, omphalos, omphalos"* - against a troubling military incursion. The child growing up in the 1940s hears "American bombers groan towards the aerodrome at Toomebridge," while "American troops manoeuvre in the fields along the road" (1980: 17). In *Electric Light* (2001), Heaney returns to the early places of the imagination, but with a new sense of energy and insight. The opening poem, "At Toomebridge," gathers up Heaney's earlier interests in local topography and replays them with a new suddenness and a new sense of the marvellous:

> Where the flat water
> Came pouring over the weir out of Lough Neagh
> As if it had reached an edge of the flat earth
> And fallen shining to the continuous
> Present of the Bann.

The title and the repeated anaphoric emphasis on "where" (four times in a poem often lines) are strong indicators of a persistent interest in places and placenames in Heaney's work. The technique of finding verbal equivalents for features of the landscape is reminiscent of the earlier "Toome," while the speaker's excited apprehension of the world recalls some of the early poems in *Death of a Naturalist* and *Door into the Dark.* Even so, there is a distinct and decisive change of perspective. The typographical indentation and the syntactical disconnectedness create the impression that the poem has been extracted from some larger sequence. The movement of water sets up a complex interplay of spatial and temporal effects, as if enacting the processes of memory and imagination as they explore the contours of the earth. The poem acknowledges both the Heraclitean flux that Gerard Manley Hopkins revelled in and the persistent, ineffaceable stuff of history, including the remembrance of "Where the rebel boy was hanged in '98." The world is charged with electricity, and poetry is born out of the tension between sameness and difference, between that which lasts and that which changes.

Heaney's renewed engagement with the energies of place in *Electric Light* is undoubtedly prompted by the changing political climate in the late 1990s. A consciousness of the ceasefire and its local consequences becomes apparent in the poem's recollection of "Where the checkpoint used to be," but this is a post-ceasefire poem in other ways as well. The stylistic corollary of the changed political order is a new willingness to entertain the ludic, self-reflexive, playfully riddling idiom that had previously appeared suspect. Heaney's self-referencing now takes on a slippery, eel-like allusiveness. The closing lines both take us back to the earlier poetry and reassert a sense of changed priorities: "As once before / The slime and silver of the fattened eel" (2001: 3). The expected "sliver" is cleverly transformed into silver, and a subtle subliminal connection is established between electric light and electric eels. We are reminded both of the "prospecting" speaker amidst the elvers in the earlier "Toome," but also of the phosphorescent eels near Toomebridge in Heaney's early "Lough Neagh Sequence." The light that came flooding in with the announcement of the ceasefire in August 1994 now seems to fill the poems with a new political promise and a new stylistic charge and energy.

Since 1994, Heaney's poetry has taken on a more reflective, retrospective disposition; it has steadily, if cautiously, opened itself to the possibilities of reconciliation and peaceful settlement. Both before and after the ceasefire, Heaney has credited poetry with the responsibility of being a witness to its times, as well as an impulse for change. He has never abandoned the idea that

poetry might have "a desirable and demonstrable relation to the life of a nation," even if his conception of poetry has broadened recently to admit more of "the ludic, the ironic, the parodic" than once seemed possible. It is still too early to tell how Heaney's poetry might develop in the aftermath of new power-sharing initiatives at Stormont, but there is no doubt, as he himself has recognised, that things have "moved on."

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Unfinished Narratives of Sparkian *Finishing School*

Closure as an Important Component in Making Sense

When the concept of the narrative is applied to works of art, especially literary art, rather than history, it is usually conceived as a teleological phenomenon. Its artistic design, which is always a question of form, implies a definite purpose that is aiming at, and therefore presupposing, some kind of closure. Even such classic examples of the postmodem open-ended novel as John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* with its proposition of alternative endings, does not really reject the sense of closure, but only makes it less definite. At the same time it becomes more demanding for the reader to get actively involved in the process of sense-making. A sense of leading to a closure, no matter whether it is with a linear or a spiral movement, or else along a zigzag path, is so deeply ingrained in the nature of narrative discourse in the novel that closures, and even post-modem vestiges of the traditional closure, are difficult to erase completely in the artefacts of fiction. It is so because closure, no matter what particular form and degree of completion it assumes as a key component of the narrative structure, is an important element in the process of constructing meaning in narrative texts. Consequently, it is fully justified to look upon the removal, or dissolution, of closure as a subversive strategy that will inevitably lead to deconstructing sense.

Subversion through Irony of the Teleological Character of Narrative Discourse

The aim of the following discussion is to look closer at how the erasure of closure, producing what has been referred to in the title as "unfinished narratives," is effected in the fiction of one of the most significant post-modem novelists, Muriel Spark. As my point of departure I have adopted the view that narrative, as a teleological activity spanned between two complementary

poles of the teller of the story and its recipient, must necessarily involve an attempt, decisive or hesitant, sometimes successful and at other times frustrated, to construct meaning. As emphasized by Wayne Booth and Linda Hutcheon, in their respective most comprehensive studies, among the strategies which foil endeavours to construct meaning the principal position should be assigned to irony which represents the greatest challenge to the well-established, and sanctioned by tradition, teleological paradigm of narrative discourse. It is the ironic mode, it seems, which in Muriel Spark's novels is most effective in removing or invalidating closures thus producing unfinished narratives which characterise most of her fiction, and at the same time it becomes a cornerstone of post-modern literature. The most explicit denial of the validity of closure can be found in *The Only Problem* (1984) that may be read as a novel about the impossibility of closing a discourse which assumes the form of a philosophical or theological inquiry, and where the reader is eventually informed, in a tone of accepted resignation, that "If the answers are valid then it is the questions which are all cock-eyed" (Spark 1985: 180).

Paradigms of Socratic Dialogue in Sparkian Fiction

Therefore it is not surprising that in Muriel Spark's novels the narrator often adopts a pose of the interrogating Socrates who, not without a good reason, is generally regarded as a master ironist. More importantly, it is the pose which belongs to Socrates, the doubter, who seems to mock, or maybe pity, his interlocutor's vain attempts to confer the finality of answers upon questions asked. Engaged in the truth-seeking dialogue with his disciple, the ironic mentor all the time undermines seemingly established meanings and defers *ad infinitum* the conclusiveness of a closure. Thus he shows reluctance to terminate their common pursuit and instead proposes ever growing uncertainty which inevitably leads to the blurring of clear-cut conclusions and to ultimate rejection of definite closures. Such Socratic dialogue, which has as its underlying principle the shunning of even provisional finality, is inscribed into the majority of Sparkian unfinished narratives, and it constitutes a characteristic feature of Muriel Spark's writing. But her affiliation with Socrates' ironic mode is most overtly acknowledged in her *Symposium* (1990) which not only through the title and the mottoes referring to Plato's and Lucian's *Symposiums*, but also by means of the setting of a convivial meeting, and the underpinning quasi-philosophical discussion, reflects, even if it is a distorted reflection, the paradigm of the Socratic debate.

The Finishing School as an Epitome of Muriel Spark's artistic creed

Without any doubt unfinished narratives constitute a distinctive feature of Muriel Spark's writing. However, if the lack of closure is taken as a probing critical instrument for the examination of Spark's novels, then it becomes evident that manifestly unfinished narratives prevail in her later fiction. Attempts and intimations of a closure, which still can be found in *The Comforters* (1957) or *Robinson* (1958) that belong to her earliest novels, are already missing in her late works of which *Aiding and Abetting* (2000) and *The Finishing School* (2004) are the best examples. In the title of my paper I refer specifically to *The Finishing School*, which is the last novel Muriel Spark got published before her death in April 2006, and I am doing it for two reasons. First of all I believe that *The Finishing School* can be seen as a testament left to the world of letters by the novelist who was giving her compelling testimony to the trends operative on the post-modern literary scene. Secondly, the very idea of the "finishing school," evoked in the title and elaborated throughout the novel, has a symbolic significance, and reflects a rupture at the heart of Sparkian narratives which on the one hand seem to tend towards a perfect completion, while on the other they demonstrate the mature novelist's awareness of the resistance of the material of art to various strategies of closure. The former, i.e. the drive of fictional discourse towards closure, is a prerogative of art imposing an aesthetic order upon existential chaos. The latter, i.e. the novel's refusal to go along with the closing tactics, results from the novelist's profound recognition of a complex relationship between artefacts of fiction and facts of life. The paradoxical nature of that rupture is best rendered by Muriel Spark's own words when she defines her aim as a novelist in terms of a commitment to the search of absolute truth through the form of the novel (see Kermode 1963) which has its limitations and is subject to various processes of relativization.

Tension between Opening and Closing as a Motive Power in Sparkian Post-modern Narrative

The Finishing School takes up the most representative themes of Spark's fiction, and like many of its predecessors, e.g. *The Comforters* (1957), *Loitering with Intent* (1981), *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1989), *Reality and Dreams* (1997), by introducing the motif of writing a book, it revolves around the tricky business of producing fiction, and makes disturbing allusions to confrontations and overlapping of imagined realities with the factual. It is a meditation in the

fictional mode on the subversive power of words and the prevarications of language employed to deal with the enigma of life, deviousness of human dealings and deficiency of social institutions. It is also an admission of the insufficiency of language, in general, and narrative discourse in particular, to grasp and render the inscrutability of divine universe and the complexity of human predicament.

The eponymous finishing school is "a place where parents dump their teen-age children after their schooldays and before their universities or their marriages or careers" (Spark 2005: 46). The "finishing school" is a significant element both in the structure of the novel and its thematic pattern. If two basic dimensions of time and space are applied here, it can be said that in terms of space "finishing school" represents a waiting hall, whereas in terms of time it corresponds to a preparatory phase which necessarily implies a sense of commencement. When at the level of certain abstraction both get combined into a spatio-temporal matrix where the Bakhtinian term chronotope may be implemented, then the finishing school can be perceived as a chronotope underpinning the post-modern discourse of the novel.

Paradoxically, throughout the entire narrative the idea of "finishing" school alludes to "getting started." Alan Kennedy speaks of such union of opposites as something particularly relevant for Muriel Spark's fiction, and he applies to it the term antisyzygy: "An antisyzygy is a union of opposites. It is not to be perceived as a fusion of contraries in which the two lose their identities and become one, but as an existing together of mutual exclusives. [...] Muriel Spark's work can be seen to be constantly striving to realise an antisyzygy" (Kennedy 1974: 152). Thus *The Finishing School* is the novel about getting ready to begin something or to launch a new phase in life: it may be writing a novel, publishing one, starting another relationship, or another career. However, looking here for a demarcation between what is vital and what is trivial turns out to be completely irrelevant as in the fictional world of Muriel Spark's novel all the evaluative distinctions and grades of significance, which derive either from ethics or from epistemology, are obliterated. The only differentiation which seems to matter belongs to the realm of ontology and it concerns the apparent separation between the beginning and the end. But even that proves to be illusory as no such separation is achieved in Sparkian post-modern novel.

If we take into consideration the criterion of teleology which, as previously postulated, is an important instrument in making sense, then the fundamental purpose of the "finishing school" and its most important *raison d'etre* becomes "getting started." Such binary opposition and obvious discrepancy between

"finishing" and "getting started" generates irony which pervades the narrative discourse of Muriel Spark's work. In a similar way the name of the finishing school, "College Sunrise," combines the sense of an ending ("finishing") with the sense of a beginning ("sunrise"). Hence the finishing school, as a domain for perfecting and consequently closing, in its purely onomastic aspect, conveying the suggestion of the opening of a day, corresponds to the idea of getting started, with a clear foregrounding of getting started in the novelist's profession. In such a way the title that represents the *leitmotif of* the novel, becomes an illustration of the basic irony stemming from the divergence between language and reality which sustains the life of works of fiction, and which is the marshy territory where the novelist is continually compelled to walk.

Instability Inscribed into the Narrative and the Illusory Nature of Denouement

College Sunrise is an itinerant enterprise run by Rowland and Nina, a married couple at the beginning of the novel, who, however, get divorced as the narrative progresses. Thus the main protagonists, and the owners and managers of the finishing school testify to the lack of stability in personal liaisons and to endemic undermining of established social structures which is a pervasive motif in Sparkian Active worlds, where human relationships are continually shifted and reshuffled. Rowland's and Nina's finishing school is an ultra democratic institution, "by its foundation, free and mobile" (Spark 2005:117), resisting any form of authoritarian order, showing disregard for conventions and intolerant of any limitations. It cannot be confined to one place to the effect that the finishing school itself as an institution is getting started over and over again:

> After another year at Ouchy [Lousanne] he [Rowland] moved to Ravenna where the school specialised in the study of mosaics. From there he moved to Istanbul where he met with many problems too complicated to narrate here. (Spark 2005: 154)

Apart from Rowland, who teaches courses in creative writing, and is himself a frustrated writer, continually suffering from "writer's block" and "professional distractions" (Spark 2005: 42), another pivotal character in the novel is Chris, a seventeen-year-old College student and an aspiring novelist with assets of youth and talent to help him climb to success. Rowland simultaneously admires, envies and hates Chris; while the latter treats his mentor with youthful disrespect, often seasoned with arrogant superiority and condescension. Chris finds Rowland's presence and his instruction indispensable, for Rowland is

"part of his identity as a writer" (Spark 2005: 98). However, when it comes to the actual practice of novel-writing, the pupil completely ignores his teacher's professional advice. Rowland sticks to the Aristotelian principles of composition and believes that the novel should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Chris, who "seemed to have a built-in sense of narrative architecture and balance" (Spark 2005: 55), little cares about the classical order. Everything Rowland professes stands in striking contrast with Chris's creed of the creative writer whose guiding principles are manipulation of history and exercising absolute control over characters.

Rowland and Chris are tied to each other with the bond of mutual interdependence. Their relationship, which seems to be the motive power of the plot of the novel, is the record of rivalry and obsessive attraction devastating and sustaining them at the same time. "I can't work without you, Rowland. I need whatever it is you radiate. I have to finish my novel in peace" (Spark 2005: 93), says Chris. "I know I'm obsessed with Chris, but I want my obsession. So does he" (Spark 2005: 115), says Rowland. Contrary to what might be expected the story of their relationship does not represent either a growing awareness of the writer-protagonists or any interesting development of the craft of practising or aspiring novelists. Although Chris fictionalises history in his novel about Mary Queen of Scots and the murder of her husband, whereas Rowland sets out to record the actuality of experience in his book *The School Observed*, in fact they are both doing essentially the same thing; and eventually they both get their novels published. Without being definitely resolved, Rowland's and Chris's impassioned rivalry finds an impassive denouement in their getting engaged in a "same-sex Affirmation Ceremony" (Spark 2005:155). The conclusion of their turbulent liaison, if that may be called a conclusion at all, is presented in the narrative as if it were a side track observation completely irrelevant from the perspective of the main story line. But then in view of such sham closure, the baffled reader is confronted with the question: what, if anything, is the main story?

Inconclusive Conclusion and Questions About Narrative Fiction in the 21st Century

The narrative discourse in *The Finishing School* deliberately arouses the reader's expectations in order to refuse to meet them. It starts a number of narrative tracs, but shows no intention to follow them till even a semblance of an end. In this respect the novel illustrates Rowland's precept for creative

writing according to which things that are left out matter more than those which are put in (see Spark 2005: 59). Similarly Sparkian fictional discourse counterpoints sounds and silences, and while hinting at a conclusion or closure, it nevertheless works with the potential of beginnings, and consequently capitalises on the unfinished quality of the narrative.

Contrary to the expectations which the title arouses Muriel Spark's *Finishing School* gives neither a sense of completion nor finality. Instead, with a thrust of irony, it launches the lives of the novel's characters onto a new course, after they have left College Sunrise, and after the same, and yet different, finishing school has restarted again at another place. Accordingly the novel closes with hints at new beginnings which open up for the whole gallery of College students and College friends and associates. Many of them belong to the margins of the narrative and have been barely touched upon in the discourse of Sparkian fiction. Thus the ending of the novel reads like an outline of a number of introductions to new story lines which are dormant and suspended in the narrative that is being wound up.

> Pallas Kapelas - her father had skipped bail, was wanted and always would be.
> Pallas married a merchant shipowner and was, so far, contented.
> Nina had not heard from Lionel Haas, not a word.
> Pansy Leghorn had a temporary job as an editor at the BBC.
> Princess Tilly had a baby girl who, as Isreael Bron had predicted, was nursed and coddled into Tilly's family, Tilly went her own way and became a society journalist.
> Albert visited his daughter from time to time, taking her a teddy bear and a bedside clock.
> Opal Gross was in the process of studying for the Anglican ministry.
> Mary Foot opened a shop in Cornwall where she sold ceramics and transparent scarves. She corresponded regularly with Rowland and Chris, passing on their news to Nina.
> Lisa Orlando got a place at Southampton University reading psychology.
> Joan Archer got a place in a good drama school, as she had for so long desired. Eventually she was to write television scripts.
> Albert was kept on at the house as a gardener, and Claire as a domestic helper.
> Elaine got a job in Geneva at the travel agency. She frequently met Albert at weekends and public holidays.
> Her sister, Celestine, had a job at the restaurant of a skating rink in Lausanne, where she also progressed wonderfully at skating. [...] (Spark 2005: 155-6)

There are many "good-byes" and "good-nights" (see Spark 2005: 110,125) in the novel, and at the same time there are many hints at new courses of life

being open. In the closing scene of *The Finishing School*, Nina walking to the hotel listens to young voices reminiscent of College Sunrise which overlap with the voice of a speaker on Sky News. And appropriately the final words of the narrative are a fragment of the weather forecast: "As we go through this evening and into tonight ..(Spark 2005: 156). The narrative closes with three dots which function as true suspension points seemingly terminating the narrative discourse. And they acquire a special significance for they both prepare the ground for an illusion of an ending and simultaneously allude to everything that has not been said and which is the potential of a beginning.

With a curious twist of irony which, after D. C. Muecke may be termed as the philosophical irony of life, *The Finishing School* is Muriel Spark's last novel. It appropriately closes the writing career of one of the most accomplished British novelists who was leading the way from the 20th century modernism, through postmodernism, into yet unrealised potential of the 21st century. Interestingly, it closes the creative life of the novelist by putting in strong relief her unfinished narratives and thus positing an undefined status of narrative art in the times to come.

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The Cons and Pros of Being Dead: The Meaning of Life and Language in *Hotel World* by Ali Smith

Once in a while in literature there appear texts which dare to confront the subject of life after death. Interestingly, some of them attempt to fathom the very moment of crossing the thin border between the known and the unknown. Perhaps the most famous modem story about the borderline between life and death is Ambrose Bierce's *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (1890). The story's perplexing time sequence and its surprise ending inspired at least a dozen stories and films in the second half of the 20th century, including such artists as Flann O'Brien, Jorge Luis Borges, David Lynch and Martin Scorsese. It might seem that the human condition immediately after passing away raises more interest and controversies than eternity itself. Undoubtedly, tackling such subjects like life and death puts a writer at an immediate risk of speaking in clichés. Therefore the authors reach for various devices and means of expression to depict the state of consciousness at the moment of the detachment between the material and the immaterial. Texts like this can be viewed in relation to the ancient tradition of tales in which a mortal hero descends into the underworld, to the abode of the dead, and in some cases, like Heracles or Orpheus, he manages to return. In *Pincher Martin,* William Golding reveals at the very end of his novel that the protagonist's struggle for survival was in fact a post mortem narrative (Golding 1956). The ghost of the brutally murdered teenage Susie in *The Lovely Bones* (Seabold 2002) desperately tries to hold on to something material before it is taken to heaven.[1] She brushes against her schoolmate who, endowed with such uncanny experience, develops later the gift of second sight. Susie narrates her tragic story already from heaven, watching her bereaved family struggling to come to terms with the horror.

Ali Smith makes an attempt to convey the most extreme sensations both physical and emotional that are evoked not only in the instant of death but also after death. The unique quality of *Hotel World* is the language Smith uses

[1] See the review of *The Lovely Bones* by Ali Smith in: *The Guardian,* August 17, 2002 at guardian.co.uk.

to render the experience of a tragic death. It is a striking mixture of lyricism and brutality, morbidity and subtlety, black humour and sensuality. Her elegy is based on a variety of linguistic devices which make the protagonists' sensations feel almost tangible for the reader. The language serves also as a means of characterizing the protagonists' identity and their condition at a certain stage of life, or, more precisely, posthumous existence.

Linguistic inventiveness is considered the hallmark of Smith's writing. Her daring verbal experiments, present also in her other novels *Like* (1997) and *The Accidental* (2005) have won her critical acclaim.[2] Referred to as "an acrobat of a writer" (Nunez 2006) and "a wonderful ventriloquist" (Kakutani 2006), Smith is particularly admired for her use of free indirect style in which she renders the surprising variety of her protagonists' voices (Poole 2005, Clark 2005).

In *Hotel World* a young chambermaid Sara dies a tragic death when she, as a joke, squeezes herself into a hotel dumb waiter and inadvertently falls down three floors. While her buried body rests in peace, her restless "rest," an insubstantial trace of her spiritual and mental existence, remains on earth for a few more months, experiencing a variety of self-revelatory emotions. The emotions concern primarily the physicality of life that can be solely rendered through the senses. Unfortunately, immaterial Sara is already partly devoid of them. Although she is still able to see and hear, she desperately longs for the feeling of touch, taste and smell.

> what I want more than anything in the world is to feel a stone rattling about in my shoe as I walk, a small sharp stone, so that it jags into different parts of the sole and hurts just enough to be pleasure, like scratching in itch. Imagine an itch. Imagine a foot, and a pavement beneath it, and a stone, and pressing the stone with my whole weight hard into the skin of the sole [...]. (Smith 2002: 3-4)

Such posthumous deliberations reveal the value of the most trivial, unappreciated or even bothersome sensations as the customarily overlooked qualities of human corporality. Indeed, in the relationship between Sara's body and the invisible fading consciousness, there is a certain inferiority of the latter, at least in terms of the knowledge of the external world. While the body is quietly rotting in its grave, Sara's spectre is vainly trying to recall the details about her fall. She must finally resort to her decaying body which appears to be much more knowledgeable, especially when it concerns Sara's falling to death and

[2] She is also the author of three collections of brilliant short stories *Free Love* (1995), *Other Stories and Other Stories* (1999) and *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003) and a reworking of the myth of Ipfis *Girl Meets Boy* (2007).

her falling in love. The body, however, is not willing to share its exclusive knowledge and dreads to be disturbed in its peaceful idleness. It is only due to the spirit's persistence and determination, which includes pulling at the corpse's stitches, that the body finally surrenders and recalls its earthly memories. The argument reads like a variation on Marvell's *A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body* (1972:103-104). However, while in Marvell's poem the bothersome duality was experienced in the human lifetime, the conflict between Sara's material and immaterial component is transferred to the beyond. The corpse insists:

> Fuck off. Leave me alone. I'm dead, for God's sake. [...] I'm tired. Go away. Don't come back we've no business with each other any more. (Smith 2002: 15, 26)

The former unity between the two of them is broken, the physicality and spirituality fall apart and become alienated. The separated body falls into a state of stupor while the immaterial element painfully longs for no longer attainable physical sensations. Interestingly, such posthumously broken harmony resulting in a certain disability of both elements, emphasizes the perfect state of human completeness during lifetime. The spirit's nostalgic reflection "We were a girl [...] we had a name and nineteen summers [...] it was no one else's name in the world" (Smith 2002: 26) is a real affirmation of the human dualistic condition, traditionally perceived as troublesome and frustrating.

Before disappearing into the next world, Sara's fading existence seems to go through an earthly purgatory, where she realizes the unique quality of life's ordinariness.

> I will miss blue and green. I will miss the shapes of women and men. I will miss the smell of my own feet in summer. 1 will miss smell. My feet. Summer. Buildings and the way they have windows. (Smith 2002: 7-8)

In her posthumous monologue, she struggles against the gradual loss of words which coincides with her approaching disappearance. It seems the final and the most painful stage of her alienation from the world.

> Seeing birds. Their wings. Their beady . The things they see with. The things we see with, two of them, stuck in a face above the nose ... In birds they're black and like beads. In people they are small holes surrounded in colour... (Smith 2002: 8)

The gaps in the text replace the lost words and reflect the lapses of deteriorating memory. The disappearing words remain in their basic definitions or are evoked through the fixed sets of connotations:

> Lost, I've, the word. The word for. You know. I don't mean a house. I don't mean a room. I mean the way of the . Dead to the . Out of this . (Smith 2002: 30)

While such treatment of words creates an effect of estrangement and, consequently, revitalizes the language, Ali Smith aims at something even more daring, namely, rendering the extreme experience of a tragic fall, the experience of a sudden death.

> Wooooooooo-
> hooooooo what a fall what a soar what a plummet what a dash into dark into light what a plunge what a glide thud crash what a drop what a rush what a swoop what a fright what a mad hushed skirl what a smash mush mash-up broke and gashed what a heart in my mouth what an end. (Smith 2002: 3)

The almost ecstatic roller-coaster sensation of moving downwards at dizzying speed, a breathtaking flight whose whooshing sound of cutting through the air is heard in the onomatopoeic "sh" verbs such as "dash," "rush," "hush" is then developed into a factual, almost clinical description[3].

> The ceiling came down, the floor came up to meet me. My back broke; my neck broke, my face broke, my head broke. The cage round my heart broke open and my heart came out. I think it was my heart. It broke out of my chest and it jammed into my mouth. [...] For the first time (too late) I knew how my heart tasted.
> (Smith 2002: 6)

The twofold character of the fatal experience, which hovers between striking intensity and chilly sarcasm, returns in the interior monologues of Sara's younger sister, Clare. Unlike their mother, who plunges into numb despair, or their father, who disposes of every object reminding him of the deceased daughter, Clare experiences extraordinary closeness with her sister. Her monologue is a record of rage, loneliness and helplessness in the face of death. The intensity and urgency of her stream of thoughts reflect her teenage rebellion, and her frequent use of obscene words and sarcasm serves to tame the atrocity she is facing.

> I still just don't get it a dead person & her a dead person & her how the two things are the same thing where does it go where did she how one minute can you be walking about & the next you can't as if like you just got lifted up & disappeared into the

[3] Smith's experiments with sound and punctuation may be linked to her fascination with James Joyce whose ouvre was the subject of her doctoral thesis. See also: M. Denes, "A Babel of Voices" in: *The Guardian*, April 19,2003 at <http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,60000,938610, OO.htmb.

> sky [...] God fuck sake one minute there is & the next you are you were just flakes of whatever stuff that you can't even see properly God now all the chest of drawers is mine. (Smith 2002: 211, 192)

The sisterhood, taken earlier for granted, is revived posthumously and reveals its strength. Clare becomes, in a way, an extension of Sara, and, as if in a certain spiritual unity, feels her dead sister's deepest desires:

> I am watching TV for you in case you are missing it I am keeping up with Brookside for you it is seriously crap & not just George Clooney is out of ER but there is a rumour that Carol is going to leave too [...]& when I eat a piece of toast it is slowly so I will remember for you what it tastes like & 1 look at things hard so you will know if you want to what they look like. (Smith 2002: 209)

While the monologue reads like an updating letter from the world, its structure resembles the rhythm of swimming under water. The echoes of Sara's passion for swimming returns in her sister's flow of thoughts. The oppressive density of the monologue, its breathlessness, almost physical tension and determination brings to mind a swimmer who is running short of breath. The gaps in the unpunctuated text feel like the moments of breathing in gulps of air when the thoughts become unbearably suffocating. The chapters narrated by Sara and her sister are complementary also in their titles. Named, respectively, "Past" and "Future in the Past," they allow for a double interpretation. The latter grammatical tense places future at a particular point of the past. Such future is, like in Sara's case, completed, or annihilated since it has already happened. However, future in the past can also be understood positively as the future rooted in the past and drawing from the past. Such future might still lie ahead of Clare, reunited with her deceased sister.

The idea of titling the chapters with the reference to the grammatical tenses is another concept of linking the protagonists' identity with the language they use. The tense defines, often subversively, the protagonists' condition. Elspeth or Else, a beggar asking for money in front of the hotel, whose existence is reduced to the basic needs, communicates in chunks of consonants: "Spr sm chn?" (Smith 2002: 45). She has disposed of vowels like of many other things in her life and uses a mutilated form of language, corresponding with her social status. Else lives, as the title of the chapter announces, in "present historic." Externally mute, she revives the memories from the past, and her internal life appears surprisingly rich. Else's random knowledge, acquired at school and in public libraries, where she occasionally seeks shelter, is quite impressive. For

passers-by she remains, however, invariably, an object of abuse, annoyance or, less frequently, pity. Nobody is inclined to recognize in her somebody (E)lse, somebody, who would escape the stereotypes imposed upon her. Like a language devoid of vowels, Else's identity remains an illegible shorthand for the world. Juxtaposed with Else, a journalist and a hotel guest, Penny suffers from a kind of logorrhea and develops a pathetic habit of making up cheap, sensational stories about herself. Since her job boils down to "fill(ing) up grey space as fast as (she) can" (Smith 2002: 169), her reviews for the style column are padded out with repetitions and cliches. Penny, who hunts for superlative adjectives to advertise dubious standards of the hotel network seems to abuse the language more acutely than uncommunicative Else. Her calculated but superficial treatment of words turns them into a commodity and devalues them[4].

The parallel between the treatment of language and the attitude to life is also drawn in the case of Lise - the bedridden ex-receptionist. Her thinking adjusts to the slow motion of her weakened body which translates into her almost surgical examination of words.

> Lise wasn't well.
> Well: a word that was bottomless, that went down into depths which well people estimated, for fun, by throwing small coins then leaning with their heads over the mouth of the hole [...] so they could make a wish. What could well people find to wish for, having everything already? (Smith 2002: 83-84)

The concoction of various meanings of the word *well*, referring to good health, satisfactory condition and a "wishing well" recreates Lise's slow train of thought. Lise ponders upon ambiguity of words and creates new sets of semantic connotations but at the same time she also experiences a monotony of thoughts and the persistent recurrence of jingles or slogans. She becomes language-ridden and slowly loses touch with outside reality. Her world shrinks to the size of her room, her bed, her mind. Her knowledge about the external world becomes irrelevant. Lise struggles against her impossibility of fitting her mental and physical condition into the space of Incapacity for Work Questionnaire. The multiple choice questionnaire proves ridiculously inadequate when it comes to conveying the complexity of her sensations. Yet, the stiffness of bureaucratic language appears to be contagious, and reading and rereading the

[4] Claudia FitzHerbert notes certain Beckettian tones in the dialogues between Else and Penny (see "The Haunters and the Haunted" in *The Spectator*, October 13, 2001). Also Alexandra Yurkovsky points out to a strong influence of Beckett in Sara's monologue (see "Maid's Nostalgic Ghost Makes a Haunting Narrator" in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, February 3, 2002).

form shapes Lise's memories into a questionnaire-like text, divided into sections and marked with headings. Gradually Lise submerges in the present moment which overshadows her past and which, though burdensome, is also revelatory.

> Would've. Did. Was. Everything - cars, buses, work, shops, people, everything - other than this bed she was lying in was into a different tense now. Now: I am a sick person. I don't do anything. My skin hurts. My face hurts. My head hurts. My arms hurt. (Smith 2002: 88)

Lise's future, however, is still ahead, even if, as the title of the chapter states, it is "future conditional."

The attempt to fit personal experience into a frame of a grammatical tense is not only a way of defining human existence as immersed in language or depicting the protagonists' mental condition. It also points to a unique perception of time by an individual at a particular moment of life. The notion of time, as one of the main preoccupations of *Hotel World*, manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways. A race with time was an integral element of Sara's life as a swimmer, where a split of a second decided about success or failure. Sara's obsessive posthumous preoccupation with how long her accident took, makes the fatal fall read as her final battle against time. Her sister goes to pains to time Sara's speed of falling by throwing different objects into the hole left in the building after the dumb waiter had been removed. This is a curious therapy for Clare, who struggles to transform her sister's senseless death into a meaningful activity. It appears that, in a paradoxical way, Sara was victorious because she fell towards death at a record speed. Consequently, death gains here an affirmative quality as an indispensable element of life. Transitoriness, on the other hand, emerges as creative evolution and, however painful, a source of self-knowledge. Such a positive orientation towards time as a productive rather than a destructive element in experience is relatively rare in literature (Meyerhoff 1960: 67-68). Clare's deliberations about the moment of death day, equally present in human life as the date of birth but simply still unmarked, become an additional contribution to the process of taming death.

Another interesting approach to the issue of time in *Hotel World* is the transformation of an objective time order, associated with clocks and calendars, into subjective relativity. It is Sara's broken watch that takes her to the watch shop where she falls in love with the shop assistant. Since the watch is the only link between the girls, it might be perceived as an instrument for measuring not time but infatuation. A sinister mechanism is thus turned into an intimate memento. Sara's watch, bearing her initials and tickling on a living wrist of

the shop assistant long after Sara's death, becomes the encapsulated extension of her existence, especially that the girl still cherishes the hope of seeing Sara again. Another instance where a clock appears as a device measuring the protagonist's individual experience is the moment of dropping a hotel clock into the empty lift shaft. Clare, who is timing different objects falling down the shaft, throws there also a clock. The clock follows the same route Sara once took and breaks into pieces at the bottom of the shaft. The end of life, the end of time. Interestingly, it seems that also in this case Sara managed to outwit time as it was her, being faster, who led the way, time following in her footsteps. The moment is also a climax for Clare, who feels that through the act of timing Sara's fall she not only executes her sister's last will but also begins to reconcile herself to her passing away.

> listen Sara [...] even though you couldn't move couldn't do anything about it listen to me you were fast very fast you were really really fast I know because I went there to see tonight I was there & you were so fast I still can't believe how fast you were less than four seconds just under four & a bit that's all you took I know I counted for you. (Smith 2002: 220-221)

The world as a hotel - the central metaphor of the book - focuses on the very subject of passing through, of transience. It also naturally points to a multiplicity of voices and a variety of perspectives. Hotels "imply more than one story [...] several stories happen in them at once [...] there is a collision of narratives only walls apart from each other" (Smith *Encompassculture).* And so it happens that the fabric of the narrative is composed of five distinctly different voices which are, nevertheless, interconnected. They allude to one another, overlap and enter into a dialogue[5]. The text reads like a kind of palimpsest. Palimpsestic is also the very nature of the hotel. It stores the flakes of skin and dust of visitors passing through, and collects the left behind random possessions. The hotel used to be a brothel - simply a different form of receiving quests. In future it might become something else, just like the lift shaft which served as a route for the dumb waiter, the grave for Sara and which temporarily is a black gash in the wall, open to new opportunities.

Ali Smith believes that stories ought to be written with the purpose of "mov(ing) us at foundation and remind(ing) us how to live and understand what we experience" (Smith Random House Catalogue online). Consequently,

[5] For a discussion of the treatment of the hotel theme by Ali Smith see G. Foden, "Check in, Drop out" in *The Guardian*, April 14, 2001 at guardian.co.uk and M. Upchurch, "The Ghost in the Minibar" in: *The New York Times*, February 3,2002.

her treatment of the sensitive subjects of love, life, death and grief is startlingly thrilling. Smith's experimental prose which focuses on the language as part and parcel of the human condition, endeavours to represent the physical and mental state of the protagonists in extreme circumstances of life. In order to imbue the very text with certain physicality, she employs a variety of linguistic devices such as onomatopoeic words, textual gaps reflecting memory slips, or text continuity that conveys a hectic pace of thinking. Her language is highly sensual. She explores the ambiguity of words and creates new semantic connotations which endow her prose with unusual freshness.

The old truth that the real appreciation of life comes with its end, is revitalized by Ali Smith with exhilarating power. Her affirmation of life and her fascination with language may be epitomized in an epitaph:

Remember you must leave. Remember you must live.

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"The Waxworks of Memory" or the Search for the Meaning of Life in John Banville's *The Sea*

"Since we are haunted now by the idea of being haunted by the past, it is tempting for contemporary novelists to try and come up with new metaphors and analogies for memory," writes Adam Philips (2005: 35) in his comprehensive review of John Banville's *The Sea* (2005). The phenomenon that Philips is referring to is succinctly described in an introduction to a recently published volume on theories of memory as a "memory boom" (Rossington and Whitehead 2007: 5), that is, a recent explosion of memory writing in the humanities and most significantly, in fiction. John Banville is one of many contemporary writers who present their readers with narrators struggling to come to terms with their past experience of trauma. The more or less conscious act of remembering and forgetting plays a crucial role in a large number of contemporary novels.[1]

The Sea, Banville's fourteenth novel, won the author the prestigious Man Booker Prize in 2005, in an atmosphere verging on scandal; in the final round, despite the protests of a group of judges, John Sutherland, the chairman, cast the decisive vote against the other runner up, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (Ezard 2005), which is, significantly, another novel about remembering and forgetting. In *The Sea*, Banville continues a number of themes which have come to constitute trademarks of his fiction: a solitary narrator dabbling in art history caught in between hope and despair, self-consciously commenting on the shortcomings of the language with which he is trying to express his anxiety (Hand 2002: 4).

As Eve Patten (2002) writes: "[r]egarded as the most stylistically elaborate Irish writer of his generation, John Banville is a philosophical novelist concerned with the nature of perception, the conflict between imagination and reality, and the existentialist isolation of the individual." That last phrase, "existentialist isolation of the individual" could be used to describe the writing of another Irish author Samuel Beckett, whose legacy is also discernible in

[1] Other significant contributions to memory writing have been recently made by Graham Swift, Sebastian Faulks, Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro and W. G. Sebald.

Banville's preoccupation with human failure as well as his narrators' obsessive attention to language (Hand 2006: x). As Philips notes,

> in his recent novels - *The Untouchable, Eclipse, Shroud* and *The Sea,* books that seem retrospectively to form a quartet - the narrators have been, in their different ways, successful men who have a sneaking and a not-so-sneaking suspicion that there really is nothing to them. (2005: 35)

All the four novels are dominated by internal monologues which attract attention to the narrators as "voices." As the author states in an interview, he considers himself to belong to the oral tradition of Irish writers (Hand and Banville 2006: 1).

In the same interview he comments on the structure of *The Sea:*

> there are really two books there - one set in the past, that is quite direct and has a pulse that's like the sea: wave sentences, pulsating, while in the present-day narrative, when Max Morden is talking about himself in the present, the style goes back to that of *Shroud.* I think it makes for an interesting tension between the two voices. (Hand and Banville 2006: 5)

The pulse of the sea is achieved by means of alternating long and short sentences, the poetic effect is enhanced by alliteration:

> They departed, the gods, on the day of the strange tide. All morning under the milky sky the waters in the bay had swelled and swelled, rising to unheard-of heights, the small waves creeping over parched sand that for years had known no wetting save for rain and lapping the very bases of the dunes. The rusted hulk of the freighter that had run aground at the far end of the bay longer ago than any of us could remember must have thought it was being granted a relaunch. I would not swim again, after that day. (Banville 2005: 3)

The opening paragraph quoted above contains both syntactic and thematic foreshadowing of the text that follows, the story that dwells on loss, grief and "the gratuitous dramas of memory" (Philips 2005: 35). The pedantically crafted structure of the novel will become apparent to the reader only at the very end, when, in the final paragraph, the gods' "departure" will reveal its tragic meaning. The role of the reader is to persist in an attempt at making sense of the narrator's monologue, which is only possible if the reader stores every detail mentioned in his memory and is prepared to fit the relevant elements into the jigsaw puzzle. That is all the more difficult as not all the details are relevant and the narrator's recollections seem as chaotic, random and unpredictable as

we may expect in a man recently afflicted by severe psychological trauma. Gradually the reader learns to navigate between the two narratives that Max Morden inhabits; he moves between the present account - his stay in a boarding house, where he is trying to recover from the loss of his wife, and the past - his childhood memories of a summer he had spent in the same place.

The memories of the summer fifty years before open the text and "swell" like the sea in the first paragraph, so that they quickly dominate the narrative. They are composed of a series of "tableaux," as the narrator calls them, each recalled with amazing immediacy and obsessive attention to detail, which may be only explained by the fact that, as Max says, the day he met the Grace family his life "was changed forever" (Banville 2005: 33). By making friends with the Grace twins, Chloe and Myles, the narrator is allowed entry into a new world where he can observe and occasionally even experience directly the middle-class life style; it is an existence so superior to that of his family that the Graces assume divine status in his eyes. He uses the term "gods" with reference to the entire family, he sees the father as Poseidon (123) or Old Father Time (90); Connie, the mother is transformed into a daemon by his sexual desire, and even Myles's webbed feet are "marks of a godling, sure as heaven" (Banville 2005: 61). The Graces seem divine to young Max because of the way they live; their superior lifestyle is marked by what they can afford: trips to France, renting a house for the whole summer, drinking gin and entertaining guests over the weekend. These become attributes of a world that the narrator aspires to enter; his dream will come true years later when he marries Anna, the daughter of a wealthy crook.

The narrative of childhood memories is occasionally invaded by the narrative of the present; however, the connection between these stories remains rather obscure until the end of the novel. The only point of correspondence is the place, and like in many previous novels by Banville, the house. The Cedars, which the Graces used to rent and endowed with magic qualities, is now a boarding house, run by an eccentric Miss Vavasour, who seems strangely attentive to the needs of her mourning guest. In an attempt at self-fashioning so characteristic of Banville's unpleasant narrators, Max Morden introduces himself as an art critic writing a book on Bonnard, but that book seems never to get written (yet another failure); instead the narrator is "working the trauma through" for the purposes of self-understanding (Kaplan 2005: 20). In a manner characteristic for trauma victims, Max Morden represses the actual external event that caused the shock, and focuses on the summer he spent in love with the Graces.

The two narratives are written in different styles; the childhood memories are extremely vivid, the narrator's professional interest in art is visible in the images which he reconstructs with loving nostalgia. His recollections are visual and sensual: "I see the game as a series of vivid tableaux, glimpsed instants of movement all rush and colour" (Banville 2005: 125). On another occasion, the narrator comments on the peculiar way in which he remembers: "Memory dislikes motion, preferring to hold things still, and as with so many of these remembered scenes I see this one as a tableau" (Banville 2005: 221), and a little bit further on he uses another metaphor of painting, where his memory is a "wall" on which he paints an image:

> [...] I mean Chloe and her mother, are all my own work while Rose is by another, unknown, hand. I keep going up close to them, the two Graces, now mother, now daughter, applying a dab of colour here, scumbling a detail there, and the result of all this close work is that my focus on them is blurred rather than sharpened, even when I stand back to survey my handiwork. (224)

The Sea is a novel preoccupied with the working of memory and it abounds in metaphors of memory as well as reflections on its randomness and unreliability. Given the dramatic moment in life in which Max is writing, it is understandable that he dwells on the parallels between the past and the present, life and death, memory and imagination. A recollection of a voyeuristic moment at a picnic provokes reflections on the nature of reality and mortality which carry allusions to Joyce's "The Dead":

> Which is the more real, the woman reclining on the grassy bank of my recollections, or the strew of dust and dried marrow that is all the earth any longer retains of her? No doubt for others elsewhere she persists, a moving figure in the waxworks of memory, but their version will be different from mine, and from each other's. Thus in the minds of the many does the one ramify and disperse. It does not last, it cannot, it is not immortality. We carry the dead with us only until we die too, and then it is we who are borne along for a little while, and then our bearers in their turn drop, and so on in the unimaginable generations. (Banville 2005: 118-19)

The "waxworks of memory" are an image borrowed from the earliest theories of memory; Plato in *Theaetetus* compared memory to a block of wax on which the experience is imprinted (Rossington and Whitehead 2007: 25). More recently, Freud conceptualized memory as the Mystic Writing Pad (Rossington and Whitehead 2007: 114) following a very similar concept. In both metaphors the reliability of memory remains unquestioned; we may have prob-

lems accessing our memories, but once we reach them, the imprint in the wax is a consistent mark of the past experience. However, Max's own experience seems to contradict his own confidence; although his childhood memories are strikingly vivid and alive with detail, on a number of occasions they prove inaccurate, or entirely made up. When Adam Philips claims that:

> Banville wants us to see that memory can be as random, as futile and baffling in its prompting, as anything else that happens to occur to us; and that what we see without looking - including our memories and our dreams - can be fascinating without being in any way intelligible or revealing, (2005: 35)

he seems to go too far. Max's memories may not always seem relevant and revealing, but in the end the story becomes intelligible and coherent, and the past narrative throws some important light on the present.

The fascinating randomness of rambling memories and the dreamy world of childhood immediately bring to mind the work of yet another great writer Marcel Proust, an affinity recognized by a number of critics and reviewers (Tague 2005, Conradi 2005). *The Sea* is particularly reminiscent of *La recherche du temps perdw*, the holiday in a seaside resort, the narrator awestruck in the presence of the divine creatures from a superior social class, reflections on mortality and finally the blurred distinction between the narrator and the implied author, all bring to mind the work of Proust. But apart from borrowing the motifs and themes from Proust, Banville seems to enter a debate with the French author. For example, the visit at the dairy farm may be read as a commentary on Proust, or even a parody. Max Morden takes his daughter to visit Ballyless just after his wife's funeral; the little streets and shops bring back the memories of the summers he spent there as a boy, but the sight of the dairy farm seems to transport him in time. Banville's description is modelled on Proust's description of the summer in Combray. In his analysis of the narrative structure of *La recherche du temps perdu*, Gérard Genette describes one of the complex anachronies as the iterative, that is, a single event which Proust describes as repeated in the past (1980: 116). Banville's memory of the farm is an iterative event in this sense; we know that the details presented must belong to a single memory; the cool air in the yard, the dog lying under the cart, the horse putting its head over the half-door must have been noticed and remembered by the narrator on one occasion, but the grammatical tenses and the adverbs used transform this visit into a repeated event: "here as a boy I would walk down every morning [...]. there was always a dog lying tethered [...]" (Banville 2005: 51). Like Proust's summer in Combray, the walk to the farm seems expanded into eternity; the

narrator is transported into the past, he remembers the shade of the horse's forelock and "the cool thick secret smell of milk" (Banville 2005: 53). The elation is dispelled by a witch-like woman of an uncertain age who, when asked about the farmer's family, surprises Max with a list of names that, to him, are completely alien. Suddenly he realises that he knows nothing about the farm:

> I found it suddenly dispiriting to hear of them [...] all crowding in on my private ceremony of remembering like uninvited poor relations at a fancy funeral. [...] All the levitant euphoria of a moment past was gone now and I felt over-fleshed and incommensurate with the moment, standing there smiling and weakly nodding, the last of the air leaking out of me. (Banville 2005: 56-7)

In *La recherche*, Proust's narrator was transported into the past moment by a trick of involuntary memory; in this way he gained access to the past experience as it really was. Banville, or rather his narrator, experiences the same euphoria only to discover a few moments later that it was only an illusion. Walter Benjamin's comment about Proust's narrator could be applied to Banville's narrator as well, namely, what matters to him is not what he experienced but "the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection [...] or of forgetting" (1929: 238). Just like forgetting is an inextricable element of remembering, death is an inextricable element of life, Max talks about life being "no more than a long preparation for the leaving of it" (Banville 2005: 98) and on another occasion, he describes life as a rehearsal for the "real drama" (Banville 2005: 184) and goes on to say:

> what I am looking forward to is a moment of earthly expression [...] I shall be expressed, totally. I shall be delivered, like a noble closing speech. I shall be, in a word, said.

The postmodern condition in Banville's work manifests itself in an attempt at "saying the world while simultaneously admitting the futility of any such act of saying actually connecting with the world" (Hand 2002: 4).

Gradually, as the narratives of the past and the present move on, the elements of the jigsaw puzzle come into place, more and more parallels between the narrator's childhood memories and his life with Anna become apparent. The marriage with Anna has enabled Morden to fulfil his childhood dream inspired by the Graces and move up socially. His laid-back wife fostered his sense of identity, which, as he says, he owes entirely to Chloe. But the crucial link between these two stories is departure and loss. The summer idyll ends suddenly when having quarrelled with their governess, the Grace twins wade into the sea

and commit suicide. Thus the phrase: “the gods departed on the day of the strange tide” of page 3 takes on its full meaning on page 246, just like the final sentence of the novel in which Max remembers the nurse telling him that his wife had just died: “I turned and followed her inside, and it was as if I were walking into the sea” (Banville 2005: 264). Twice in the novel, Max makes a self-conscious comment on his own narrative saying that he is compiling a Book of the Dead. Indeed of all the people that appear in his childhood memory, only the governess survives as the housekeeper of the Cedars, as Mr and Mrs Grace die a few years after the suicide of the twins. Max’s narrative and especially the story of the Grace family remembered with great love of detail suddenly assumes a therapeutic function in the eyes of the reader; the death of his first love is remembered in lieu of the more recent one. While the recollections of the summer he spent with the Grace family fill the pages of the text he is writing, they keep the memory of the agony of his wife’s death at bay. In the Tibetan tradition the Book of the Dead is written to bring spiritual comfort to someone looking after someone dying, and Max’s memories, which seemed random and irrelevant, serve this very purpose. The narrator focuses on his first encounter with death, his first experience of loss and mourning, in fact, the whole novel, like the *Eclipse* before may be summed up as a “crisis of mourning” (Wilkinson 2003: 27). Max is unable to mourn his wife; he seems unable to come to terms with this loss, and at some point the repressed emotions explode in a barrage of verbal violence: “You cunt, you fucking cunt, how could you go and leave me like this [...]” (Banville 2005: 195). The repression is also visible in the sharp contrast between the discourse time of the two stories. Max takes up 29 pages to describe his visit at a farm where his mother used to send him to fetch milk and only 6 pages to describe his relationship with Anna from their first encounter to their wedding day. The relevance of the twins’ suicide is deferred until much later in the narrator’s life, it is his wife’s death that makes it painfully relevant. Banville tries to illustrate the tragedy of the human condition which resides in the duality of life and death: one becomes relevant only when the other loses relevance.

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PART IV

American Literature

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Ambiguous Heritage and the Search for Identity in Native American Fiction

Identity has been a hotly debated issue in American cultural history as well as in literature, it "has become one of those words full of sound and fury" (Pinsker 2001: 51). As Daniel Boorstin states, "Americans are the people in quest of [themjselves" (1963: 5) and thus the relationship between one's inherited and received culture or between various inherited cultures is very frequently depicted in American literature. In the notoriously known passage from *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) by Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, the question of what constitutes American identity is answered by means of comparison with Europe, but already de Crevecoeur mentions cultural plurality and mixed heritage as important aspects of American identity. Of course, he does not use these terms but talks about "that strange mixture of blood" and gives an example of a family "whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have four wives of different nations" ([1782] 1990: 897).

While it was still possible in de Crevecoeur's times to define American national identity in the Anglo-Saxon context, as European-Americans formed an "unquestionable" majority and thus could perceive themselves as "unhyphenated Americans," as "the incarnation of America as such" (Barsa 1999: 185) with the shifting demographics they, too, need to become aware of themselves as European-Americans, that means in a way ethnic Americans. As in the post-WW II years the idea of a nation state gave way to the concept of identity, the interest in defining American national character has been replaced by the interest in ethnicity.

An interesting part of this complex issue is the relationship between various ethnic heritages and personal identity. The issue can be even more complicated when cultural heritages are connected with ethnic / racial heritages and thus when one's body becomes an ethnic or "racial signifier" (Lin 2003: 53) and a person then has to define his/her identity not only by inner means of who the person feels to be but also against external judgments and stereotypes of what others assume about the person's identity based on the person's body.

As suggested above, the discussion on identity is quite a contentious and complex one and this paper offers only one perspective, one possible approach by focusing on how the issue of mixed cultural heritages, racially signifying bodies and personal identity has been dealt with in selected works of Native American literature, namely those texts that consciously address these issues on the example of people of mixed Native American and Euro-American (or African-American) origin, the so-called "mixedbloods." The first work that fictionalized the uneasy situation of mixedbloods is Mourning Dove's *Cogewea* and the way the novel approached the topic is contrasted with several contemporary works by Louise Erdrich and her husband and collaborator, Michael Dorris, which also make the quest for identity and the complex situation of the people of multifaceted heritage one of their central concerns.

The difficulties involved in biculturalism or mixed heritage are well understood by a majority of Native American writers because they themselves are mostly experiencing similar dilemmas - they write about the Native American world yet they live on its margins if not out of it, in the intellectual part of the white world, on university campuses. They often have mixed origins and might not necessarily know native languages, and thus their Native American identity is rather pan-Indian than tribal. Yet, in the mainstream world where these authors have usually received their education and which, for the most part, forms their readership, they are typically recognized as minorities, or marginal voices, and are judged against prevailing stereotypical images of what constitutes an Indian. Furthermore, Native American novelists express themselves through a typically Euro-American medium - the novel, which is very different from the Native American oral tradition. Louis Owens aptly concludes:

> For the contemporary Indian novelist - in every case a mixedblood who must come to terms in one form or another with peripherality as well as both European and Indian ethnicity - identity is the central issue and theme, and, as [James] Clifford has suggested, ethnic identity is always mixed, relational, and inventive. (1994: 5)

Most of the mixed-blood characters engage in complicated identity quests which usually have the form of a dilemma, of a choice between one of the inherited traditions. Thus when Mourning Dove in 1927 published *Cogewea, the Half-Blood: A Description of the Great Montana Cattle Range,* it was not only a first novel by a Native American woman, but also a work that clearly named "what was to become the dominant theme in novels by Indian authors: the dilemma of the mixedblood, the liminal 'breed' seemingly trapped between Indian and white worlds" (Owens 1994: 40).

The book's protagonist Cogewea is the daughter of an Okanogan mother and a white father but after the father deserts the family and the mother dies, Cogewea and her sisters are brought up by their maternal grandmother Stemteema, who represents the traditional elder. The dilemma for Cogewea is presented in the form of a choice between a white and a mixed-blood suitor. While the novel is "recognizable as a typical romantic story of betrayed love, stoic loyalty, and sentiment," at the same time it attempts to "define the complex dilemma of the mixedblood" (Owens 1994: 45).

Cogewea says about herself: "I am not a full-blood - only a breed - a *sitkum* Injun" (Mourning Dove 1981:26) and laments: "Regarded with suspicion by the Indian, shunned by the Caucasian, where was there any place for the despised breed!" The book's villain Densmore confirms this opinion when, on seeing a ranch full of people of unrecognizable origins, he wonders: "Where were these picturesque Indians ...? Instead, he had been lured into a nest of halfblood, whom he had always understood to be the inferior degenerates of two races" (Mourning Dove 1981: 48).

When Cogewea is about to marry a white easterner, her sister Julia agrees "not because she was ashamed of the Red race, but since civilization was the only hope for the Indian" (Mourning Dove 1981: 274). However, the traditional grandmother Stemteema warns Cogewea about the dangers awaiting her as a wife of a white man. Explaining her decision, Cogewea says: "My white blood calls to see the world - to do - to live" even if her Indian part (Spirit, as she says) "tells me that I am stepping wrong" (Mourning Dove 1981: 253). While at first Cogewea tries to embrace the white part of her heritage by marrying a white suitor, she later sees through his wickedness and marries a mixedblood.

According to Louis Owens, in having Cogewea marry a "breed" like herself and allowing them to accidentally come into fortune, Mourning Dove fails to produce a satisfactory ending of the tale. Not only does it remind him of a pulp fiction plot, but it postpones the issue till the next generation:

> With the conclusion, the dilemma of the mixedblood poised between red and white worlds remains unsolved. Very literally allowed a place in neither the Indian nor white races, Cogewea will [...] produce children who will, like the parents, be halfbloods. The novel ends on a note of stasis, with nothing resolved, none of the many questions answered (Owens 1994: 48).

On the contrary, Arnold Krupat considers the choice of a happy ending as already a positive sign of the possibility of future for the people of mixed descent. His criticism of *Cogewea* tries to see the novel in its historical context: "In this

regard, it may fairly be said that *Cogewea's* irresolution provides an extraordinarily accurate account of the betwixt-and-betweenness of mixedbloods of different blood types and quanta in the period" (Krupat 2002: 95). Contrary to Owens, Krupat appreciates the fact that Mourning Dove refused to fictionalize the idea of the mixedblood as a vanishing race. In "holding firm against the advice of her collaborator/mentor, L. V. McWhorter, who recommended a tragic ending" we may see "Mourning Dove's belief in Indian survivance" (Krupat 2002: 88).

Moving more than half a century forward, we find a very interesting writer of mixed descent - Native American and German-American - Louise Erdrich. In her critically highly acclaimed novel, *Love Medicine* (1984), one of the mixed-blood characters is Albertine, the daughter of a Native American mother and a white father. In Albertine's case, it is again the body that reveals her to the outer world as a mixed-blood. She says about herself: "I was light, clearly a breed" (Erdrich 1984: 22). She feels different from the rest of the family because of her looks and seems uncertain of how she should relate to the fact. On the contrary, her mother Zelda has no doubts as to where her daughter belongs. She says about Albertine: "My girl's an Indian. [...] I raised her an Indian, and that's what she is" (Erdrich 1984: 23).

In proclaiming her daughter Indian, Albertine's mother not only expresses her disregard for the whites but also affirms Albertine's membership in the community. Erdrich plays out the two possible approaches to defining an Indian - the "blood quantum" and the "culture" and shows the evasive, if not completely mistaken, nature of racial identification. Zelda insists that her daughter is only Indian because of the way she was brought up yet even in that comment she forgets to acknowledge the impact of the off-reservation schooling that Albertine has received. Regardless this omission, Zelda identifies Albertine in a manner that is very typical for Native Americans - the self-identification combined with the community's acceptance. As Gerald Vizenor says:

> The application of mixedblood geometric scores was not a form of tribal cultural validation. Skin color and blood quantums were not the means the tribe used to determine identities. The Anishinaabeg [Chippewa] classified a person Indian if he lived with them and adopted their habits and mode of life.
>
> (qtd. in Rayson 1991: 31)

While Albertine can be seen as the most hopeful character in *Love Medicine*, the one who eventually leams how to live effectively in both worlds and how to see her dual heritage as two parts of her identity complementing one

another, Pauline Puyat (introduced in Erdrich's 1988 novel *Tracks')* is, according to Annette Van Dyke, "the character most troubled by being a mixedblood" (1992: 21). Pauline is a metis, a person of mixed Indian and French-Canadian ancestry, a descendant of hunters in the clan no longer known by its name.

Pauline engages in a complicated spiritual quest and her main dilemma is of spiritual matter: she is attracted both to the traditional Chippewa beliefs and to Christianity. The Chippewa people, although now living in reservations in North Dakota, came originally from the Great Lakes area and their mythology is connected with water. For Pauline, the tribal tradition is represented mainly by the power of the water monster Misshepeshu, which is usually considered evil, although in some stories he has a dubious character because good spirits, such as Thunderbird, an opponent of Misshepeshu, are associated with the sky. As Ruth Landes claims, we can, to a degree, draw a parallel between Misshepeshu's and Thunderbird's fight and the eternal conflict of the Christian God and Satan (1968: 31).

Finally Pauline decides that the Chippewa world is vanishing, not worthy of preserving because the people "receded and coughed to death and drank" (Erdrich 1988: 139) while the white world is spreading and becoming more and more powerful. Pauline concludes: "It was clear that Indians were not protected by the thing in the lake or by the other Manitous" (Erdrich 1988: 139). Thus she turns away from her Native American heritage and embraces Christianity in the hope of saving the Chippewa people by bringing them to Christ. She decides to enter a convent but in order to become a nun, and particularly a saint, which is her greatest ambition, Pauline has to lie about her Indian ancestry to be accepted. Nevertheless, the dilemma remains. In fact, most of Pauline's "behavior shows her conflict between her Chippewa and her Euro-American heritage she attempts to claim" (Dyke 1992: 21).

While in the convent, Pauline still believes in the power of the water monster. She hopes to gain a victory over him with the help of Christ, whom she sees in her visions, ironically, as seated on the convent's stove. When her visions disappear, she believes that Christ, a newcomer in the area, no longer appears to her because the water spirit man has chased him away. "Christ was weak, I saw now, a tame newcomer in this country" (Erdrich 1988: 192). Pauline hopes to become the Christ's "savior" (Erdrich 1988: 195), which for her means to save Christ from the water monster by killing the monster. Thus she sets out in a boat on the Matchimanito Lake, Misshepeshu's home, armed with a spear in a scene reminiscent of a flirt, an initiation ritual, a hunt, and parodying St. George's fight with the dragon. At the same time, Pauline is,

symbolically, trying to do away with her Native American heritage, to kill this part of her identity and her past.

Thus "Pauline plays out her bizarre amalgamation of Chippewa belief and Catholicism" (Dyke 1992: 22) in a way conflating, as Dyke suggests, Christ with the Chippewa sky spirit and the Chippewa water monster with Satan (1992: 21) yet herself using the power of the water monster to become a sorceress. While seemingly trying to help, Pauline becomes dangerous to the Chippewa community. When she appears in *Love Medicine* as Sister Leopolda, she is already in the state of gradual personal disintegration as if the two spiritual traditions (or at least the ways in which Pauline interprets them) cannot hold together, cannot be made into a meaningful and life-sustaining whole. It is thus Pauline's spiritual life that becomes a battlefield for the two traditions she inherited. She claims the Euro-American part of her heritage by passing as white and converting to Catholicism and she turns away from the Native American part of her self.

The most difficult position among the mixed-bloods seems to be that of a person of Native American and African-American origin as the person is often subject to racial discrimination and ostracizing for *both* parts of his/ her heritage. This is the case of Rayona, one of the protagonists of Michael Dorris's *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987). Rayona is trying to comprehend her life and to come to terms with her identity. Her mother is Native American and her father black yet in her identity quest Rayona is not helped much by either of them - her father is mostly absent and her mother, with whom Rayona has a very tense relationship - is fatally ill. Rayona's parents are no longer together and Rayona remembers what her mother used to say to her father: "We're the wrong color for each other" (Dorris 1987: 9). Aware of the skin color issue, Rayona comments: "Once, in a hardware store, I found each of our exact shades on a paint mix-tone chart. Mom was Almond Joy, Dad was Burnt Clay, and I was Maple Walnut" (Dorris 1987: 9).

Rayona is brought back from the city of Seattle to a Montana reservation to live with her grandmother. Although her grandmother, Ida still speaks the tribal language and knows traditional dancing, she is not really the traditional elder like Cogewea's grandmother, because she lives her life by TV shows. Instead of providing Rayona with a community of accepting relatives, she can only offer television characters. As Owens says: "Ida will seldom be far from a television set [...] living in virtual isolation from the rest of her family and tribe" (Owens 1994: 220).

When a priest introduces Rayona to a local youth group, she is painfully reminded of what her body signifies: “The two [Indian teenagers] look me up and down. I know what they see. Wrong color, outsider, skinny, friend of the priest” (Dorris 1987: 40). Instead of receiving support from her extended family, Rayona is, in fact, abused by a relative, a full-blood cousin Foxy: “You’re the one whose father is a nigger” (Dorris 1987: 41). Unlike Albertine, whose community accepts her and claims her despite her dual heritage, Rayona’s community rejects her as an outsider, as different, a lesser member of the community, even an enemy:

> Foxy calls me “Buffalo Soldier” after the black men who were cavalry scouts and fought Indians a long time ago. He leaves a note stuck in the Africa section of my geography book. “When are you going home?” [...] “You sure you ain’t looking for the *Blackfeet* reservation?” (Dorris 1987: 44)

The priest tries to be helpful by acknowledging Rayona’s situation:

> “It’s not easy being a young person alone at your age,” Father Tom says, “when you’re different.”
> “I’m not different.”
> “I mean, your dual heritage,” he says. “Not that you shouldn’t be proud of it.” This is the first time he’s admitted to my skin color, to the shape of my nose, to the stiff fullness of my hair. (Dorris 1987: 51)

However, Father Tom is not making the situation any easier because he finds himself physically attracted to Rayona. Finally, he tries to persuade her to go back to the city (so that she could not report his sexual advances). To help her solve her identity problem, he offers a cheap would-be Native American piece of jewelry: “Wear this. Then people will know you’re an Indian,” (Dorris 1987: 58). As Owens comments on the scene, “identity is all surface” (Owens 1994: 221) almost a mask to be put on or taken off. “With the medallion, Rayona may become Native American rather than African-American” (Owens 1994: 221). But in this way, through misunderstanding and trivialization of the identity issue, Rayona becomes one of the loneliest characters, deprived of support from family, tribal community as well as the institution of the church. Running away into a neutral territory, Rayona is trying to find out who she actually is or could be.

Despite Rayona’s claim that: “It’s as though I’m dreaming a lot of lives and I can mix and match the parts into something new each time,” (Dorris

1987: 80) she is not really mixing but trying on different identities in order to fit in. For example, she assumes an identity of a white middle-class, spoiled daughter. Finally though, she realizes that in order to come to terms with herself and the things that happened to her, she must return. Paradoxically, she achieves a position within the reservation when she, dressed up as Foxy, her main abuser, triumphs at a rodeo. Masking her gender and ethnicity and thus, for the sake of the rodeo ride, passing as her full blood male cousin, Rayona challenges the community's assumptions and their stereotypes about racial identity. By becoming a "rodeo queen," actually receiving a prize "for the roughest, toughest, clumsiest cowboy" (Dorris 1987: 112), Rayona wins her position in the reservation community.

Still, Rayona seems to be connecting with only one part of her identity, the Indian part, and not with her African-American heritage and thus rather than mixing different parts of her dual heritage, she, like the other characters, makes her either/ or choice and claims only one part of her origin.

The last character to be mentioned is an example of a new, postmodern and thus no longer either/or approach to self-identification and ethnic identity. It is Vivian Twostar from Dorris's and Erdrich's postmodern novel *The Crown of Columbus.* Vivian's quest for identity in no longer the making of a choice between her inherited cultures, as it was the case with the previous characters; she is truly mixing and recombining her heritages. Vivian Twostar characterizes her heritage as "a mixed bag of New and Old Worlds" (Dorris and Erdrich 1991: 11). Vivian is the genuine personification of a melting pot. She explains:

> I belong to the lost tribe of mixed bloods, that hodgepodge amalgam of hue and cry that defies easy placement. When the DNA of my various ancestors - Irish and Coeur d'Alene and French and Navajo and God knows what else - combined to form me, the result was not some genteel, undecipherable puree that comes from a Cuisinart. You know what they say on the side of the Bisquick box, under instruction for pancakes? Mix with fork. Leave lumps. That was me.
>
> (Dorris and Erdrich 1991: 124)

As Farrell points out, "ethnic identity for Dorris and Erdrich is always complicated and shifting because many of their characters play many different roles in the fragmented, postmodem environment they move in" (1999: 124). To borrow David McCrone's phrase, they "wear their identities lightly" (1992: 195) in which way they may be seen as variations on the Native American trickster *topos.* It is not, however, an end in itself but rather a means to one's

survival. Contrary to Cogewea, who experienced her position of a mixed-blood as limiting, and to Pauline and Rayona, for whom the dual heritage was painful, for Vivian the complex heritage opens many new possibilities and allows for a broader perspective. In an interview, Erdrich states that unstable identities enable one "to pick and choose and keep and discard" cultural values at will and thus one can survive in a world that is so rapidly changing (Bruchac 1987: 79).

Dorris and Erdrich are playful about this part of identity quests in a multicultural, post-modern society - the kind of consumer attitude of choosing and purchasing whichever item suits you. On several occasions the Native American or mixed-blood characters eat or prepare ethnic food, as when for example Vivian's son Nash is eating "a bean burrito for dinner" (1991: 110). It reflects the fact that multiculturalism works best at the level of popular culture and life style. We wear ethnically marked clothes or accessories, eat ethnic food, and watch films about diverse cultures. While at the beginning of the twentieth century, as John Cawelti claims, popular culture still continued to foster white Anglo-American hegemony, in the last decades we can witness a strong "tendency toward mixing and overlapping of hitherto separate ethnic traditions" (Cawelti 1996: 14). Popular culture is "increasingly attuned to recombinations of traditional heritages" and the new media including the Internet, make "possible types of diversity and recombination that would have been unimaginable during the 1950s and 1960s" (Cawelti 1996: 15).

There are many instances of this mixing and recombination in the novel. For example, Vivian and her son Nash attend together a karate course and adopt some of the "Asian wisdom" involved in it. However, before each karate class session they add their own ritual - they recite a "portion of the Navajo Blessing Way" (Dorris and Erdrich 1991:113) thus mixing together similarly functioning elements of their own Native American culture and Asian tradition. In the same way, when birthing, Vivian goes to a regular maternity hospital but takes with her a cloth bag that Grandma made for the occasion, filled with herbs Navajos traditionally associated with giving birth (1991: 92). In the culminating scenes of the novel when the lost treasure of Christopher Columbus is rediscovered, aspects of diverse cultures are consciously brought together and commented on by the novel's narrator:

> The world has become a small place, all parts connected, where an [American] Indian [hand wrapped in a clean white diaper] using an ancient Asian art can break into an old European box, witnessed by someone who grew up in Australia.
>
> (Dorris and Erdrich 1991: 369)

In the character of Vivian, the novel illustrates well the paradigmatic shift in the acceptance of ethnicity within American culture - the contemporary celebration and the fashionable *going ethnic.*

Perhaps the process of defining American identity has come full circle - because Vivian's heritage is so complex, she can no longer be labeled by a hyphenated descriptor. She can only be called American. It may confirm what de Crevecoeur suggested and some earlier proponents of cultural pluralism believed - that being American is, in fact, being of mixed origin and thus there is no need for any hyphens to describe Americans' identity.

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Instilling the Sentiment: The Poetic Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson did not leave behind himself a consistent philosophical system. His contribution to American, and not only American, philosophy and literature is of different nature. Irwin Edman (1951: v) in his introduction to *Emerson's Essays* writes that he does not read Emerson professionally. "For disclosures of the nature and signature of things," he says, "I prefer, on the whole, more explicit, more literal, and more analytic thinkers." Emerson indeed is neither explicit nor analytic, which is one of the reasons why he enjoys the reputation of a difficult philosopher. Still Edman (1951: v) admits that he does read Emerson, and he reads him because Emerson is "the thoughtful writer of prose which has, without any of the more patent devices of verse, the magical effects of poetry."

In certain respects, Emerson is a complete failure as a philosopher. This is the result of his open hostility towards systematic thinking. Emerson's aunt is recorded to have said that no Emerson "is capable of deep investigation or of long continued thought," which some consider "the profoundest comment on her nephew" (Buell 1975: 45).

A good illustration of Emerson's failure as a systematic thinker is his introduction to *Nature.* In his introduction Emerson (2006: I 5-6) sets out to clarify the basic terms employed in the treatise, most importantly the very term *nature,* which, as we all know, is capable of having manifold meanings. The most interesting passage is the last paragraph of the introduction, and it runs as follows:

> Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE. In enumerating the values of nature and casting up their sum, I shall use the word in both senses; - in its common and its philosophical import. In inquiries so general as our present one, the inaccuracy is not material; no confusion of thought will occur. *Nature,* in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the river, the leaf. *Art*

> is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture. But his operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world of the human mind, they do not vary the result.

Emerson's definition of nature is strangely circular. Nature is nature plus art ("both nature and art [...] must be ranked under this name, NATURE"). This is quite confusing, even though Emerson explains that this is not the same nature. He speaks of nature in the philosophical ("the NOT ME") and the common import ("essences unchanged by man"). And yet, for no apparent reason, graphically Emerson distinguishes at least three, and in some editions even four, different kinds of nature: there is Nature (with an initial capital), NATURE (in capitals), and (ordinary) nature. This is definitely more than is needed, especially that shortly afterwards he announces that anyway, he will use the word both in its philosophical and common sense. He claims that the difference between the two exists but it is so little that, in fact, it does not exist ("his [man's] operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world of the human mind, they do not vary the result"). Thus the seemingly solved problem of the circularity of Emerson's definition returns. His argument may be summarized as follows: Nature in the philosophical import equals nature in the common import plus art, but the art element is so insignificant that it can be, or even should be, disregarded, so Nature in the philosophical import equals nature in the common import. Or to put it even more concisely, Nature is nature. Such a definition is at best a tautology. Considering the fruits that it bore, Emerson's great analytical effort seems to have been wasted.

In the passage quoted above Emerson attempts some other definitions of nature, which are even more baffling. The tricky thing about Emerson is that he introduces entirely new ideas in the disguise of a paraphrase. Thus what in the text is presented as merely an elaboration of the original definition is, in fact, an entirely new logical proposition, standing in a very dubious relation to the previous one.

First nature is defined in contradistinction to the Soul ("Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul"), from which it follows that Nature is the universe bereft of the spiritual element. Nature equals the Universe minus the Soul. Then, at the beginning of the very next sentence, Emerson defines nature in contradistinction to human beings (Nature is "all that is separate form us"), only to reject this definition in the second part of the same

sentence ("all other men [...] must be ranked under this name, NATURE") and to define nature in contradistinction to the Self ("all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME"[1]). Emerson seems to be in two minds as far as other people are concerned. He cannot articulate his views clearly because his views are far from being clear.

Emerson's philosophy is haunted by the suspicion that man lives in the world of phantoms created by his own mind. In *Nature* he indicts solipsism in Chapter VII: "It leaves God out of me. It leaves me in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end. Then the heart resists it, because it baulks the affections in denying substantive being to men and women" (2006: I 64). He struggles to transcend the duality between the soul and the world, the duality which he makes elsewhere the cornerstone of his philosophy. For he has proudly declared himself an idealist and

> [ijdealism saith: matter is a phenomenon, not a substance. Idealism acquaints us with the total disparity between the evidence of our own being and the evidence of the world's being. The one is perfect, the other, incapable of any assurance; the mind is a part of the nature of things; the world is a divine dream, from which we may presently wake to the glories and certainties of day. (2006:1 64)

His doubts seem to be gaining the upper hand in the essay entitled "Friendship," where he declares:

> I cannot deny it, O friend, that the vast shadow of the phenomenal includes thee also in its pied and painted immensity, - thee also, compared with whom all else is shadow. Thou art not Being, as Truth is, as Justice is, - thou art not my soul, but a picture and effigy of that. (2006: II 98)

And later he will add: "A friend therefore is a sort of paradox in nature. I who alone am, I who see nothing in nature whose existence I can affirm with equal evidence to my own, behold now the semblance of my being" (2006: II 205). Emerson (2006: III 61) is also the author of the saying: "Let us treat the men and women well: treat them as if they were real, perhaps they are," which is probably the most succinct presentation of his views on this matter. Emerson is a philosopher who keeps his philosophy in the state of constant doubt.

That is why Emerson's explanations usually do not explain anything, just the opposite, they only make the things more complicated. The introduction to *Nature* is a case in point. Emerson, as if realizing this, finally offers words of

[1] This could be an echo of Fichte's perplexing notion of the "Transcendental Ego." Still Emerson seems to ignore the difference between the transcendental and the ordinary ego.

comfort to his disturbed readers: “In inquires so general as our present one, the inaccuracy is not material; no confusion of thought will occur.” The weakness of this position is obvious; details do matter and should not be shoved aside that easily, just because they are inconvenient. But in his inability to explain, Emerson is similar to the Zen master from the following koan:

> THE STUDENT Doko came to a Zen master, and said: “I am seeking the truth. In what state of mind should I train myself, so as to find it?”
> Said the master, “There is no mind, so you cannot put it in any state. There is no truth, so you cannot train yourself for it.”
> “If there is no mind to train, and no truth to find, why do you have these monks gather before you every day to study Zen and train themselves for this study?”
> “But I haven’t an inch of room here,” said the master, “so how could the monks gather? I have no tongue, so how could I call them together or teach them?”
> “Oh, how can you lie like this?” asked Doko. “But if I have no tongue to talk to others, how can I lie to you?” asked the master. Then Doko said sadly, “I cannot follow you. I cannot understand you.”
> “I cannot understand myself,” said the master. (“A Collection of Zen Koans”)

This affinity might run deeper. Both Zen and Emerson’s philosophy are animated by the spirit of rebellion; they are both iconoclastic. Even though Zen is commonly referred to as religion, it is a very unusual religious denomination as it rejects official creeds and religious dogmas. Considering this, it may actually be called an “anti-religion.” Similarly, Emerson’s philosophy may be described as an anti-philosophy. Emerson rejects the very principles of logical thinking.

The whole of *Nature* is actually a refutation of the definitions from the introduction. Emerson does present nature as something possessing spiritual characteristics. Nature is discussed as a source of Beauty, Language, and Discipline. He further undermines the validity of the initial statement on the structure of the universe (“the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul”) by questioning the material existence of nature. As has been observed, his idealism verges upon solipsism. Emerson (2006: I 48) speculates that nature could be “the apocalypse of the mind,” or an image painted “in the firmament of the soul.” This would mean that man is not separate from nature but part of it (or that nature is part of him). In Chapter VII Emerson (2006: I 65) makes the following statement: “[Tjhat spirit, that is, Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old.”

Emerson rejects his analytical definitions for he finds them too restraining. He is much more himself when he announces in "History" that "nature is a mutable cloud which is always and never the same" (2006: II 14). He welcomes paradox and contradiction. In *Nature* Emerson makes a number of contradictory statements. He argues that nature is both the spirit and the matter, me and not me, me and other people, God and man, the object and the subject of perception, essences unchanged by man and essences changed by man. Nature is all this and much more; it is a great riddle. Solving this riddle would mean finding the answers to all important questions. Nature is the mysterious Oversoul, in which all opposites are reconciled. It is unity underlying the seeming diversity of the created world. For differences exist only on the surface. This is what the juxtaposition of the contradictory definitions of nature might imply. Definitions feed on differences; if differences are only seeming differences, and the true reality is an all pervading oneness, then to differentiate and to define is a sheer waste of time. Everything is everything. If one analyzes, one refuses to acknowledge this spiritual truth.

Emerson never analyzes, he synthesizes. He does not want to divide but to unite. Ultimately, he wants to transcend all petty differences and distinctions, and reach the oneness of the ideal world, the real world.

One of the greatest paradoxes of Emerson's philosophy is that this Platonic thinker inspired the philosophical tradition which is avowedly anti-Platonist and anti-metaphysical. And yet this is not an accident that such a philosopher as Frederick Nietzsche studied Emerson carefully and was deeply moved by his writing.[2] It may be true that all texts deconstruct themselves but still there are texts that deconstruct themselves more than others do. Emerson's essays belong to this category. Emerson's aim is incommensurate with his method. His language runs counter to his argument.

The problem has been already identified by Charles Feidelson, Jr (1962: 147),

> What is extraordinary about Emerson's writings is the way in which the problems he tried to ignore rose up again to dog him, lending a richer texture and content to his work. His flagrant inconsistency and the paradoxicality that he could never exclude from his theory were the product of his encounter with the making of literature and

[2] For the account of Nietzsche's studies of Emerson see Thomas H. Brojber *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context. An Intellectual Biography* (University of Illinois Press 2008), where Emerson opens the list of the major philosophical influences on Nietzsche's thinking (22-25). For a more detailed comparison of the two philosophies see David Mikics's *The Romance of Individualism in Emerson and Nietzsche* (Ohio University Press 2003)

> with the claims of diversity upon every concrete fact. What is even more important is the seminal effect of his point of view, or the kind of thinking illustrated by it: the way his facile generalizations, which were intended as philosophical answers, communicated a new set of questions to the literary mind. While he spoke of the world as two only in order to suggest how it might be one, he thereby acknowledged a duality which is no less real because it is conquered in each instant of poetic speech.

The Emersonian cosmic vision of unity-in-diversity is also, at the same time, the vision of diversity-in-unity. Consider the following passage from Emerson's journal,

> The metamorphosis of Nature shows itself in nothing more than this that there is no word in our language that cannot become typical to us of Nature by giving it emphasis. The world is a Dancer; it is a Rosary; it is a Torrent; it is a Boat; a mist; a Spider's Snare; it is what you will; and the metaphor will hold, & will give the imagination keen pleasure. Swifter than light the world converts into that thing you name. (I960: VIII 23; qtd. in Buell 1975: 170)

Feidelson (qtd. in Buell 1975:170) sees this passage as "a spontaneous dance of self-determining and autonomous symbols" that leads to "a literary anarchy." Emerson abandons logical connectives, producing thus a volley of images. As Feidelson (1962: 151) notices, "The house of Rhetoric is built without logical mortar." There is definitely more diversity than unity to this catalogue. The world is at the same time a dancer, rosary, torrent, boat, mist, and spider's snare. As these images flash before our eyes, we cannot help but conclude that the world is constantly in the state of becoming. Nothing is stable, nothing is predetermined, everything changes. The world is a myriad of perceptions, and the truth, if there is such a thing as the truth, is bound to be subjective - it depends on the perceiver. The truth is what you will. The poet - the sayer creates the truth by creating metaphors. The truth is made rather than discovered; the world obediently converts into the thing the poet names, as if acknowledging the superiority of the poet's will. I wouldn't say that this is what the text implies; I'd say that this is what it explicitly states, even though it does not sound like Emerson the Metaphysician, or even Emerson the Idealist. It sounds very much like Nietzsche, the Prophet of Will and Becoming. Passages like this one, Nietzsche might have copied verbatim from Emerson.

Emerson is frequently caught arguing against his professed idealism. This is on the one hand due to a certain contradiction in his views, and on the other due to the language that he uses, and also his attitude towards language in general. Relativism is a corollary of subjectivity, which is in turn a corollary of

individualism. Thus it is small wonder than since Emerson argues for extreme individualism, sometimes he finds himself arguing for relativism, including moral relativism. In "Self-reliance" he declares, "'[I]f I am the devil's child, I will live then from the devil.' No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it" (2006: II 51). Emerson empowers the individual by giving him the right to decide what is right and wrong, and what is true and false. For Emerson the truth is not something that emerges in the process of logical argumentation. It is rather like a flash of the lightning. You see it, and you know. Hence in *Nature* he states, "Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence" (2006: I 5). A statement like this makes the whole philosophy and philosophizing redundant. We are reminded of Swift's intelligent horses, who laughed when Gulliver tried to explain to them human systems of natural philosophy (1967: 315). When the truth is obvious, it is obvious, and there is no need to write about it. Emerson's proposition will be echoed in Whitman's poetry. The speaker of "Song of Myself' will boldly state, "And what I assume you shall assume" (1955: 49).

Emerson always perceived himself more as a poet than a philosopher. In the letter to his future second wife Lydia Jackson, he writes, "I am bom a poet, of a low class without doubt, yet a poet. That is my nature & vocation" (2003: 24). As a poet, he believes that language is something more that a merely passive tool that one uses to describe what is and what is not. He empowers language along with the individual. The poet -.the sayer is capable of deciding what is true and what is false. He can do so as long as his metaphors influence people's hearts. Thus truth appears to be a function of language. Obviously, this is not what Emerson explicitly says, but what he does say comes very close to it. The beginning of "Self-Reliance" is a very lucid presentation of the program of Emerson's poetic philosophy:

> I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional. Always the soul hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they instill is of more value than any thought they may contain. To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, - that is genius. Speak your latent conviction and it shall be universal sense. (2006: II 46)

And this is why Emerson neither explains nor analyzes, but stuns and inspires. Emerson, a former preacher, appeals to his readers' emotions rather than the

rational faculty. The strength of his argument lies in the strength of his images and metaphors.

It has been argued that Emerson's style is a natural extension of his metaphysical project. Emerson believes "that there is no fact in nature that does not carry the whole sense of nature," that "the entire system of things gets represented in every particle" (Feidelson 1962: 151), and that all nature is a visible garment for the spiritual truth. Thus he validates his use of symbol and synecdoche. He also says that nature is "one thing and the other thing, in the same time," justifying his reliance on metaphor (Feidelson 1962: 151). And since metaphor points to a secret similarity between two seemingly dissimilar objects, all these tropes may be viewed as means of reinforcing the message of the all pervading oneness. And yet at the same time they resist and subvert this message. Both metaphor and symbol tend to multiply the meanings, approaching dangerously the trope of irony. They always contain a certain surplus of meaning and suggest the inexpressible other, for which there is no room in the perfectly monistic system.

In this way Emerson comes very close to Nietzsche's ideal discourse, the discourse which "seduces, tempts, forces, overturns." This is, as Nietzsche (1998: 149) says, the discourse of "bom enemies of logic and straight lines, desirous of the foreign, the exotic, the monstrous, the crooked, and the self-contradictory."

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The Jewish Other Half: Girlhood on the Lower East Side as Presented in Immigrant Narratives

"I was learning good English, I was reading and with the trait of my race for adaptability I was quickly learning the ways of this country" (Cohen 1995: 256). The words of Rahel/Ruth/Rose Gollup explain the cultural transition from a childhood in Tsarist Russia to an adulthood in America, abruptly thrust on the shoulders of a maturing girl. This paper traces the construction of a female Jewish American identity. With the use of Critical Discourse Analysis, it compares two works of first-generation immigrant women coming of age in New York's Lower East Side: *Bread Givers* (1925) by Anzia Yezierska and *Out of the Shadow* (1918) by Rose Cohen, an autobiographical novel and an autobiography, respectively.

To begin, it is worth considering the women writers' cultural subjectivities. The beginnings of their life stories seem representative of countless nameless Jewish immigrant women populating the Lower East Side. Both were bom in the western reaches of Russia in the early 1880s, immigrated to the USA in their young teenage years together with their large families, toiled in New York's sweatshops and tried domestic service. They were highly sensitive about gender - and zealous about education. They mastered English, and their quaint, local color - Yiddish vernacular was appreciated by the mainstream audience. Cohen and Yezierska reached the height of their careers in the turbulent 1920s. Cohen, however, never achieved the educational accomplishment or nationwide prominence that Yezierska enjoyed. In mature adulthood the course of Yezierska's life sharply diverted from the ordinary experience of Jewish womanhood at that time, through her flirtation with Hollywood and the American artistic elite. Cohen's life, in contrast, was cut short at the age of 45, possibly by suicide. In the late 20th century both Cohen's and Yezierska's works were republished, yet only the latter became a bright star in the firmament of American ethnic writers. As put by Thomas Dublin (1995: xviii), Cohen "has come 'Out of the Shadow,' but it is clear that she has not fully entered into the light."

Incidentally, the lives of the two Lower East side residents intersected on both factual and fictitious planes. As discovered by Dublin, Yezierska in-

corporated into her 1927 short story, "Wild Winter Love," a 1922 *New York Times* report of a suicide attempt by "a Rose Cohen, 40," who plunged into the East River. The protagonist of the story, Ruth, wrestles with the responsibilities of immigrant family life and a desire to write her autobiography. Having authored *Out of the Ghetto,* she achieves success, which estranges her from her tailor husband. Then she falls into the arms of a Gentile lover, and eventually commits suicide. By now it is impossible to completely separate fact from fiction in this story to know to what degree it reflects Cohen's biography (Dublin 1995: xv-xvi).

Bread Givers and *Out of the Shadow* portray Sara Smolinsky and Rahel/Ruth Gollup, eldest daughters, in their rebellion against the Old-Country values and lifestyle. Sara struggles against the virtual tyranny and abuse of the children on the part of the Orthodox father. Ruth's attitude, however, has more complex twists. Upon arrival in the New World, she is determined not to lose any of her religious zeal and outward expressions of faith, and the swift Americanization of her once pious father shocks her. But as Ruth grows up, the American environment bears its stamp on her and she becomes the family's agent of modernity, persuading her mother to cast aside her wig, encouraging her to read fiction, and eventually disobeying her father on the matter of marriage. Both girls are mesmerized by what America offers. Yet, they have different ambitions. Sara is determined to live independently and become "a finished *teacherin."* Ruth's prospects are not as definite; it is only implied that she desired some kind of social advancement earned with her own effort, not just a comfortable position through marriage. More importantly, the heroines pursue a common dream: to find romantic love outside the confines of tradition. They are out for a spiritual union of soul mates, not a financial deal or a social contract. Ruth is not afraid of marrying a Christian convert, and Sara makes an even further departure from her culture by becoming Gentile's wife. Finally, having realized their romantic and professional pursuits, both young women reconcile with their heritage and with a new conscience embrace things Jewish. To cut the story short, they leave their homes, families, and people in order to love them in the end. Ruth describes her identity quest in the following words:

> now that I had a glimpse of the New World, a revolution took place in my whole being. I was filled with a desire to get away from the whole old order of things. And I went groping about blindly, [...]. And then [...] a little light came to me and I was able to see that the Old World was not all dull and the new was not all glittering. And then I was able to stand between the two, with a hand in each. (Cohen 1995: 246)

As far as their chosen place in American society is concerned, Sara Smolinsky has a far more definite outlook and priorities than Ruth Gollup. Perhaps it is connected with the genres containing different kinds of the autobiographical gaze. Cohen, writing directly about herself, seems to find it difficult to characterize herself as decisively. We learn that she looks beyond the sweatshop, saying, "Surely this would not end there. Would this be all I would see of that other world outside of Cherry Street? And she waited from day to day" (Cohen 1995: 247). Ruth's ambiguous identity is also manifested in her names, which is not the case of Sara. Bom Rahel, she still went by that name at home, in America. In her "greenhorn" days, she was involuntarily named Ruth by her boss's Americanized wife, who advised that she should take a less cliched Jewish name, and it became the name of her autobiographical persona in public dealings, also in the Anglo context. This dichotomous identity underscores the distinction between the private and the public, and the Old, and New World as well. Rose, a name yet further removed from the Jewish tradition, is the one that is used by the author herself. Thus Cohen's identity is clearly split.

For Sara and Ruth, "America" stands for a promise of a more affluent and happier existence, in contrast to the dreary experience of Hester Street. Both novels employ the notion of "America" as a banner-word, which is flashed to the readers on numerous occasions and has the function of a cognitive trigger with highly compressed meaning. Another such rhetorical device is the word *Americanerin* sneeringly used by Reb Smolinsky when speaking of his disobedient daughter. When used by Sara, the statement "I am American" (Yezierska 1975: 138) compresses a totally different set of ideas and explains her whole rebellion in the briefest way. Cohen ends her autobiography by quoting her now accomplished father: "After all this is America" (1995: 313), where she consciously uses the figurative construct promoting the American Dream. Banner-words are also used in Sara's text: "He was the Old World. I was the New" (Yezierska 1975: 207). This conflict is further suggested by the use of a simile, which also carries a compressed meaning: the father is called "a tyrant more terrible than the Tsar from Russia" (Yezierska 1975: 65), while Sara, setting off to college, compares herself to Columbus "starting out for the end of the earth" (Yezierska 1975: 209). Here the spatial and temporal divide emphasizes emotional distance.

The two writers also use the rhetorical reversal of the American Dream in order to underscore the split in their families. The Americanized daughters eventually experience comfort and social recognition, while their parents live the lives of want and destitution. Yezierska eventually sends the rabbi father

onto the street peddling for pennies. Ruth's family goes through years of hardship, always on the verge of unemployment, homelessness and starvation. In the end, they achieve a relative success, with father opening a small but prosperous family-run grocery and the eldest son, a would-be-rabbi, graduating from Columbia University as a teacher. Mrs. Gollup and Mrs. Smolinsky definitely do not share the American Dream as both are worn out by physical exhaustion and worry. Sara's mother experienced only loss upon her arrival. Ironically, she claims to have been much better off back in Russia, "Who'd believe me, here in America, where I have to bargain by the pushcarts over a penny that I once had it so plenty in my father's house?" (Yezierska 1975: 30). She concludes on the sentimental note, "There ain't in America such beautiful things like we had at home" (Yezierska 1975: 33). Upon arrival in America, the Gollups became deprived of whatever modest traces of affluence they had possessed back in Russia; now, instead of a fine brass Sabbath candlestick, they have to use a brick to hold candles, not to mention the broken and incomplete furniture, or the succession of shabbier and shabbier lodgings.

In this way, Yezierska and Cohen rhetorically undermine the long-standing myth of America as a Promised Land, a paradise offering all virtues and wealth to *all* its inhabitants, in opposition to Europe and its allegedly corrupt environment. Both authors nostalgically remember the open, sunny fields and fresh air of their European childhoods, the abundance of simple, nutritious food, and good health. In America, teenage Ruth develops anemia, which drains all her strength and repeatedly confines her to bed for months. Sara, who works and studies tirelessly, living virtually on nothing, displays no major health condition probably only thanks to her innate stamina. Yet, there is a different America, and both Cohen and Yezierska reveal its rewards to the readers. Sara recounts her college entry as the passing of the gates of Eden, "But know I came to a town of quiet streets, shaded with green trees. No crowds, no tenements. No hurrying noise to beat the race of the hours. Only a leisured quietness whispered in the air: Peace. Be still. Eternal time is all before you" (Yezierska 1975: 210). Ruth finds a similar paradisiacal refuge in a Connecticut retreat established for immigrant children, where she worked and recuperated during successive summers. Cohen writes, "I walked among the tress. [...]. The leaves touched my face and I stood still. The quiet seemed to surround me and every now and then there was a twit, a rustle, and overhead the sky shone blue. [...]. In the house too it seemed as if I were living in a fairy tale" (Cohen 1995: 262). A clear-cut distinction between the immigrant and Anglo settings is evident here, and only those privileged to enter the inner circle can drink from America's fountain of youth.

New York City at the turn of 19th and 20th century was the largest metropolis in the US, and its Jewish population made a huge cultural impact. A guidebook from the period, *The Sidewalks of New York,* described the Lower East Side in the following way, "the enormous area east of the Bowery and south of 1 Oth Street, which [...] is almost exclusively Jewish." One could encounter there "Yiddish signs, Yiddish newspapers Yiddish beards and wigs" (Rose Cohen 2003). The Jewish enclave was also probably the world's most densely populated urban neighborhood at that time. In the words of Abraham Cahan, the district "covers a comparatively small area, something less than half a square mile, wherein is crowded a little city of its own, the ghetto, with a population of 500,000 souls. Half a million men, women, and children, almost exclusively Polish and Russian Hebrews" (qtd. in Rose Cohen 2003). Jacob Riis writes in his *How the Other Half Lives,*

> The homes of the Hebrew quarter are its workshops also. [...] You are made fully aware of it before you have travelled the length of a single block in any of these East End streets, by the whirr of a thousand sewing-machines, worked at high pressure from earliest dawn until mind and muscle give out together. Every member of the family, from the youngest to the oldest, bears a hand, shut in the qualmy rooms, where meals are cooked and clothing washed and dried besides, the livelong day. It is not unusual to find a dozen persons - men, women and children - at work in a single room. (1971:88)

In numerous first-hand accounts of the immigrant "other half," New York is hardly the Promised Land. It is neither Yezierska's nor Cohen's autobiographies that became the paradigm of the genre. Unlike Mary Antin, they experience initial repulsion to New York City and its citizens (Muir 2000: 7). According to Lisa Muir, Yezierska and Cohen strive to "'expose' their ethnicity to a dominant group that was blind to its own clannishness. They hold up their own ethnic group status as one for contemplation rather than revulsion" (Muir 2000: 8). The strategy of differentiation is used by Yezierska to emphasize the distance between America's newcomers and her native citizens. On election day, Sara's sister says, "They say work can't start till they got a new president" (Yezierska 1975: 2), and repeatedly uses the pronoun to refer to "the other half." Interestingly, Cohen also remembers an election night, but her account is ridden with terror. It is used to underscore her and her people's status as outcasts of the second degree, their existence as outlaws, and their exclusion and marginalization even within the ethnic ghetto. When "Americans" are celebrating their democratic ways, the immigrant girl is numb with fear caused

by the assaults of the Irish claiming a privileged status. The worst nightmares of persecution come alive again, now in the shade of the Statue of Liberty. Ruth explains, "I had grown used to seeing strange Jews mistreated whenever they happened to come to our village in Russia. But after election night I felt differently" (Cohen 1995: 104).

Ruth and Sara face not only a social gap between their fellow countrymen and Anglo-Saxons, with their quiet ways and elegant appearance, but also experience a chasm between the generations of the Jewish Americans. This can be observed through the use of the strategy of differentiation into "us" and "them." This potent rhetorical tool, just as banner-words, is symbolically irrefutable because it rests on the relationship of familiarity, it is indeterminate, and it limits the audience's perception of choices (Paine 1981: 17). Sara differentiates herself not only from her parents but also from her less willful sisters. She cries, "Thank God I'm living in America! You made the lives of the other children! I'm going to make my own life!" (Yezierska 1975: 138). Also by the juxtaposition of social actors, Yezierska achieves the effect of differentiation. She writes, "I began to feel I was different from my sisters" (1975: 65), and throughout the story she builds a virtual wall separating the experiences and personalities of the girls. In the end, Sara reflects, "Sitting side by side with **them [...]** I felt stranger to **them** than if I had passed **them** in Hester Street" (Yezierska 1975: 214, emphasis mine). Ruth, the daughter of a tailor, in turn, writes unabashedly about her "blinding dislike for the whole class of tailors" (Cohen 1995: 247). She distances herself further from her people by stating, "I could never quite be a part of the filth I had absorbed" (Cohen 1995: 275). It is through her exposure to mainstream America at the Settlement, a hospital - which led her to reading the New Testament, struggling through Shakespeare, and attending night classes - that she develops rebellious attitudes: "walking through the street it seemed to me that now I did not belong here. I did not feel a part of it all as I did formerly" (Cohen 1995: 250).

Both Ruth and Sara feel a sense of empowerment and pride at now being able to read in English and participate in the larger cultural exchange by entering "the rival cultural discourse," to use William Boelhower's term (1987: 50). Reading becomes a tool of enculturation as well as a manifestation of rebellious attitudes for both Jewish women. Their ancient tradition has made them well-acquainted with the narrative form through Biblical stories. Now they move beyond the confines of tradition, which becomes a liberating experience. As noted by Muir,

> Taking up the pen not only separated women from the Jewish community, but as immigrants, Jews, and women with working-class backgrounds, they could be "quadruply marginal" to American society as well. Frequently forced to live outside of society at large, and without a command of the English language, the women wrestled with their own silence. (2000: 8)

For Ruth and Sara, reading takes center stage in their lives, and they experience the dire reality around them through the textual lens. Ruth is also overpowered by narration; she confesses to "making up stories for herself," seemingly devoid of any meaning, but in fact, helpful in explaining the world around her (Cohen 1995: 197). She is also captivated by the autobiographical "I" as she mentions, "the simplicity of the intimate tone of the first person" (Cohen 1995: 190). Ruth builds her new identity around the written word and cannot accept the situation when her suitor does not share her enthusiasm for education. Writing letters later becomes a form of passionate romance with an educated Americanized Jew as well as a manifestation of her rebellion against the father, who "commanded [her] to drop writing the letters" (Cohen 1995: 320). Similarly, Sara's romance and marriage to her principal from work also starts around the word: the accomplished teacher instructing his young adept how to pronounce English words.

The women characters in Yezierska's and Cohen's writings are typically passivized and impersonalized by their fathers, to use CDA terminology again. Suffice it to say that Reb Smolinsky boasts of marrying off two of his daughters in one day, of course in the traditional way, without taking their opinion into account. And this is what Sara rebels against. She resolves, "to marry myself to a man that's a person, I must first make myself for a person" (Yezierska 1975: 172). To personalize the heroine, and thus differentiate her from her sisters, Yezierska consistently uses the active voice as well as the words *make* and *person* when referring to Sara. Ruth's father is nearly successful in his attempts to strike a match between Ruth and a financially secure grocer, thereby conforming to Jewish customs. Interestingly, the traditional and formalized courtship ceremonies, which can be seen as a rite of passage, become an occasion for Ruth to assert her separate identity for the first time. After her family have chosen her future husband, Ruth remembers that during the preparations, "The choice was left entirely to me for the first time. [...] I chose a pretty pair of shoes and saw they were the right size" (Cohen 1995: 212). In Ruth's case, her shoes are a simile of her social role. Prior to that, her father always made her grow into her shoes. She writes about her first pair of American shoes that took her

through her first immigrant years of struggle, "My shoes [...]- already worn out and still too large for me" (Cohen 1995: 125). Now, socially recognized as an adult, she has enough willpower to say no to her father. In contrast, her brother, who hates his old-country shoes and demands "American shoes," is less hesitant about his own position and chooses to "fling them from a strange roof' (Cohen 1995: 191) so he would never be able to find them again, even if his father makes him. Importantly, in the final chapters of her *Out of the Shadow*, Cohen throws herself back into twilight, casting the spotlight on her accomplished brother and father, thus giving way to men.

In the end, strikingly, the heroines arrive at the same understanding of their position in the family. After lonely pursuits of their dreams, they finally become reconciled with their fathers. They seem to be able to finally enjoy the best of both worlds, living as hyphenated Americans. Both *Out of the Shadow* and *Bread Givers* have somewhat cliched endings (see Zaborowska 1995: 129-31): marriage. Although these unions are of their own choice and against the Jewish tradition, ironically, they are not entirely in discord with it. As we are reminded by Yezierska in the words of Sara's father, "It says in the Torah: *A woman without a man is less than nothing"* (1975:270). Eventually, both Ruth and Sara conform halfway to this rule. Cohen, however, proposes a more complicated relationship to men and America than Yezierska. In this way, the daughter-of-the-tenements turned autobiographer stays closer to the social reality of the era by unabashedly exposing her own weaknesses and psychological tantrums. Yezierska, in turn, "the Cinderella of the Ghetto," as a novelist offers a nearly utopian role-model to follow for her "hungry-hearted" female readers looking for bearings in the cultural maize of their new world reality.

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Raymond Chandler and His Ambiguous Relationships to Women: A Search for Hidden Meanings within His Crime Novels

Raymond Chandler (1888-1959) is recognized today as one of the greats of American crime fiction. In the "hard-boiled" pattern of Dashiell Hammett, he is often described as a realistic writer of the American scene in the 1940s. And a dark vision it is, filled with betrayal and dishonesty, wherein even the protagonist is not a hero. A Chandler detective may have more integrity than the other characters in the story, but not that much more. His clients have hidden agendas and devious motives, especially the women. None are pure, some even are diabolical and evil.

Chandler began writing crime fiction in his mid-forties, but had been writing poetry and essays since his college days in England (MacShane 1976: 23). He modeled his first crime stories on those of Dashiell Hammett, whose writing he admired, and sought to have them published in *Black Mask,* a very successful "pulp" magazine where Hammett also published some of his fiction (MacShane 1976: 48-49).

His first published short story was "Blackmailers Don't Shoot," which he later described as "pure pastiche" (MacShane 1976: 51). In 1939, after five years of writing short stories for various pulps, he produced his first novel, *The Big Sleep* (MacShane 1976: 61; Freeman 2007:174-175,177). Six more novels followed *{Farewell, My Lovely,* 1940; *The High Window,* 1942; *The Lady in the Lake,* 1943; *The Little Sister,* 1949; *The Long Goodbye,* 1954; *Playback,* 1958), and in his lifetime three collections of his short stories also were compiled *(The Simple Art of Murder,* 1950; *Trouble Is My Business,* 1950; *Pick-up on Noon Street,* 1953). Another short story collection, *Killer in the Rain* (1964), was released posthumously. His last novel, unfinished when he died in 1959, was *Poodle Springs,* later completed by Robert Parker with the permission of the Chandler estate (1989). Parker later wrote a sequel, *Perchance to Dream* (1991).

Although widely hailed for his almost brutal realism, as the co-authors have previously demonstrated (Kania 2000a; 2000b; Kania and Pervushina 2003), his works lack realism in one dimension in particular, that relating to gender. In the depiction of women both as crime victims and crime perpetrators, especially the latter, his fictional cases show an unmistakable gender bias. Actual American crime statistics show a slightly higher rate of victimization of women than is shown in Chandler's novels (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1996). More importantly, other American crime statistics (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999) show a much lower incidence of women as criminal offenders than Chandler's novels suggest.

In the examination of assailants and victims in Chandler's novels previously reported by the co-authors (Kania and Pervushina 2003), we calculated that 80% of his fictional violent criminal offenders are male, and 20% female, omitting one unknown assailant. Thus violent women are the assailants at a level disproportionately higher in Chandler's works, 20% (20 of 102). This is almost twice the frequency found in the official U.S. crime statistics (11%) and more than twice the frequency in the novels of his literary model, Dashiell Hammett (8%). Chandler's 20% female assailants clearly exceed the expected level of violence to be attributed to women, whether that expectation be based on reality or on modeling from Hammett.

Not only does he write of women as killers at a higher frequency that official statistics show, he makes multiple murderers of Velma Valento in *Farewell, My Lovely*, Carmen Stemwood in *The Big Sleep* and Mildred Haviland in *Lady in the Lake*, writing at a time when female serial killers were exceptionally rare.

For the scholar inclined toward a psychological vein of literary analysis, this invites a sincere inquiry into his state of mind regarding women. Did Chandler actually think that women were more dangerous than they are in real life? Did he anticipate or experience violent behavior in the women he knew? Did Chandler fear women in general?

Because Chandler (2000:20,52) claims to have written with a spontaneous, improvisational style, it is unlikely that he deliberately chose to over-emphasize women offenders in his novels and short stories, or to cast Marlowe's relationship with women in any particular way. Yet he did, and so we may suspect that he did so unconsciously. Thus it is his unconscious motivations which we hope to explore in the current analysis.

Women in his stories are often portrayed as both attractive and attracted, perhaps even over-attracted, to Chandler's characters, Philip Marlow in particular. They frequently emerge as sensual, over-sexed, sexually aggressive,

forward, and even promiscuous. But Marlow is not particularly responsive to their attentions. As Sergei Belov explains:

> Marlow is an object of women's attention again and again. It proves that, on the one hand, this character is a real man, on the other hand, it reminds the audience that a woman can be dangerous if somebody is involved in a passionate affair with her. She can harm or even destroy a man. This idea presented an old cliché, a stereotype of the American mass consciousness connected with anti-feminism. [...] The genre of hard-boiled detective fiction absorbed the philosophy and the code of American individualism. In the framework of this genre a woman is viewed as a potential, eternal source of evil. That is why in many hard-boiled detective novels a woman is responsible for all the problems and damages.
>
> (Belov 2003: 12-13, trans. L. Pervushina)[1]

In 1949 Gershon Legman claimed to find evidence of latent homosexuality implicit in the Marlowe character, and by implication in Chandler (Abbott 2002: 75), a claim Chandler disputed directly (Freeman 2007: 163-164). Be the charge valid or not, we do believe that Chandler had unresolved issues with powerful women, which manifest themselves in his novels.

Chandler wrote in what he described as a "whorehouse style" (2000: 59). Yet that expression of his clearly suggests a negative view of some women, the working occupants of whorehouses. This negativity toward the sexuality of at least some women does not explain why Chandler had, at the very least, a subtle, unconscious motivation to portray women as threatening.

Trying to understand why this is so, and why Chandler differs from other hard-boiled crime fiction writers on this stylistic point, is open to speculation. It could be that Chandler consciously perceived women as more threatening than his contemporaries and wrote to accentuate this viewpoint. He may have been a latent homosexual as Legman and Abbott suggest. Similarly, owing to cynicism, he may have been far less likely to employ the motif of the "damsels in distress" under the protection of the modem knight errant, the private eye. Alternatively, he simply may have sought to "flip" the pattern of other crime novelists of his times to give his mysteries more originality. Perhaps something

[1] **<I>njinn Mapjio CHOBa h CHOBa BbicrynaeT o Sbc k t o m ateHCKoro BUMManus - aoKaaaiejibCTBo Toro, HTO OH - «HaCTOBUIHH MJOKHHHa», H B TO Xie BpeMS - HailOMHHaHHe O TOM, HTO ¡KeHIHHHa nopoii h c c c t nonroe.Tb TOMy, k t o xoTb KpaeM OKa3aacs 3aaeT Gypefl CTpacTefl. IIocneaHee - iiiTaMn aMepHKaHCKoro co3HaHHJi, OKpameHHoro aHTH<|>eMHHH3MOM. [...] «Kpyroñ aerexTHB», nepeHSBinHH cncTeMy Koaexca aweptiKaHCKoro nHanBnayaaH3Ma, ocTaBHa aceHiiiHHy b b c t h o m no.ioipeHHH KaK h c t o h h h k 3aa, n He caynaiiHO b o m h o t h x «xpyTbix aeTeKTHBax» eft cyjxaeHO HeCTH OCHOBHyiO OTBeTCTBeHHOCTE 3a npHHHHeHHBIH ymep6.**

in his own life experiences revealed itself in his fiction. Determining which of these alternative explanations better explains his motivation is a question which Chandler scholars need to undertake.

Considering Chandler's unusual domestic relationships, this bias may suggest a hidden hostility toward or fear of women lurking in this presumed "macho" male writer's personality. Frank MacShane's biography of Chandler (1976) and a more recent biographical study of Chandler by Judith Freeman (2007) offer considerable insights into the ambiguous relationships of this major American literary figure with the women in his life and in his fiction.

In some ways Chandler appears as a "mamma's boy." He lived with his mother until her death in 1924. He was thirty-five years of age at her death and had never married. Just two weeks later he married Cissy Pascal (Freeman 2007: 46-47), with whom he had been having an affair for some years, dating back to when she was married to another man (MacShane 1976: 32). Cissy was eighteen years older than Chandler and had a colorful past history. Supposedly a nude model in her youth, her marriage to Chandler was her third. Chandler referred to her as "highly sexed" and her letters to him being "pretty hot" (Freeman 2007: 64). In 1924, the year of her marriage to Chandler, at fifty-three she was still a stunningly attractive woman, but soon her age began to show and a series of lingering ailments began to drain her past vitality and beauty. In these later years Chandler became more of a caretaker for his invalid wife than an equal marriage partner. The relationship began to mirror his past relationship with his ailing mother.

Marlowe's labors in the cause of justice cannot rescue him from his solitude and the emptiness of his personal life. The narration is progressively more melodramatic and Marlowe is shown as getting more lonely from one tale to the next. There is a yearning for some form of fulfillment that life has yet to give him. Perhaps that emptiness was manifesting itself in Chandler's life also as the ailing Cissy became less of a lover, partner and companion.

While Marlowe "can keep a safe distance" from some of the women he encounters, Belov notes that he is not "made of stone" (2003: 13). He rebuffs the sexual overtures of the millionaire's daughter in *The Long Goodbye*, and does not surrender to the charms of sexually manipulative Velma, whom he meets as the dangerously tempting Mrs. Grail in *Farewell, My Lovely.* But in that same novel he finds Ann Riordan more interesting and a spark of romance emerges between them in. Their romance fails to develop, but later he falls in love with Linda Loring and is contemplating their marriage in his last novel *Playback.* Although he did not finish his last novel, *Poodle Springs*, its initial

chapters and outline portray Marlowe as married, and contentedly so. Thus his response to women varies as his perceptions of them varies.

Philip Marlowe varies in another way, as he succumbs to the forces of time, aging with the novels. In *The Big Sleep* (1939) he is in his early thirties, and by *The Long Goodbye* (1954) he is in his late forties. The passage of time, contemporary events, and his difficult experiences with crime, criminals and clients shape his character and personality. He becomes cynical and sadder for it. This aspect of the Marlowe character was superbly presented in the film adaptation of *Farewell, My Lovely* with Robert Mitchum and Charlotte Rampling (Dir. Dick Richards. AVCO Embassy Pictures, 1975). Mitchum as Marlowe exudes exhaustion, melancholy and despair. In such a mood, it could be expected that a man, even if a normally healthy heterosexual, might have a depressed libido. But an alternative explanation continues to be raised - that women really do not interest Marlowe nor his creator, Chandler.

Megan Abbott (2002), using a deconstructionist approach and expanding upon a 1949 critique by Gershon Legman, suggests that questionable behaviors in the superficial masculinity of the key Philip Marlowe character hint at his latent homosexuality, and by implication latent homosexuality in Chandler. Marlowe is suspect because he never succumbs to the sexual temptations of the devious women he encounters. But Marlowe is not a clear surrogate for Chandler. Also this analysis of Marlowe is flawed. In several of his novels he does respond to a woman romantically. Ann Riordan stirs his libido in *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940) but Marlowe fails to take the opportunity of having a sexual relationship with her, an event cited to raise doubts about his sexual orientation (Freeman 2007: 162). He does court Linda Loring, first met in *The Long Goodbye* (1954) and appearing again in *Playback* (1958), and it is she whom Marlowe was to marry in *Poodle Springs* (Chandler and Parker 1989). Marlowe resists the charms of wicked women, misses an opportunity to seduce the honorable Ann Riordan, but surrenders to true love and romance with Linda Loring. Thus our analysis does not concur with the implication of an exclusive, latent homosexual orientation for Marlowe. He is quite able to respond romantically and passionately in heterosexual relationships, even if not in every potential relationship with a woman. As Chandler himself expressed it, “the fictional detective is a catalyst, not a Casanova” (1950: *x).*

Nor does the characterization of latent homosexuality fit Chandler. He very easily succumbed to heterosexual temptations. His history was that of a womanizer, guilty of multiple adulteries (Freeman 2007: 93, 100-102, 105-106, 214-217), who sought out and enjoyed the company of women, romantically

and sexually. And of these, several could have served as models for the evil and manipulative characters in his novels (Freeman 2007: 304, 308, 310-315).

He occasionally wrote or spoke disparagingly of homosexual men and of those who associated him with them (Freeman 2007: 158, 164, 290), but also included a gay pairing in the short story "Pearls Are a Nuisance." While some critics have labeled him a homophobe, others still suggest he was a closeted gay (Freeman 2007: 158, 196). Of course, both could be true, and this could have been the compensatory behavior of a man with self-doubts, chasing women to chase offhomosexual urges. Such reasoning may be possible, but the arguments are not compelling in the face of the contrary evidence of his heterosexual orientation and behaviors.

His heterosexual yearnings for Cissy Pascal, who became his wife in 1924, suggests that he was interested in women, and fancied romantic love (MacShane 1976: 32). He began to court Cissy while she was still married to Julian Pascal, her second husband. She was already in her forties, but looked far younger. Also she dressed and behaved as a much younger woman (Freeman 2007: 64). Julian Pascal was older than Cissy, "a frail and delicate man who looked older than he was" (MacShane 1976: 32). Cissy was uncomfortable leaving Julian for Raymond, saying that she did love Julian, but loved Raymond more (MacShane 1976: 32). So, could the cheating ways of Mrs. Grayle be based loosely upon the infidelity of Cissy and her betrayal of Julian for Raymond? If so, then perhaps Chandler is providing the rationalization for her abandoning Julian, his age and infirmity holding back the energy of the younger woman and failing to measure up to her libido.

When the tables turned in the later years of their marriage, in the 1940s, when her age and ailments made Cissy sexually unavailable, he remained devoted to looking after her, watching after her health and welfare. However, he aggressively began pursuing and propositioning secretaries at Paramount Studios where he was under contract as a screen writer (Freeman 2007: 214-217).

So there is another option also based on the history of Chandler and Cissy. Chandler's women characters were unfaithful or promiscuous and the married ones were adulterous. So too was Chandler. He was a serial adulterer. Yet he truly was devoted to his wife. Could his story be inverted into his women characters? Consider that his character Velma/Mrs. Grayle in *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940) is married to a much older man. Velma was a Hollywood "wanna-be" (an aspiring actress), a "B-girl" (a prostitute who meets potential clients in bars) and a "moll" (a mistress) to a minor gangster Moose Malone, who considered her "as cute as lace pants" (Eder 1975) before she met and married the much

older Judge Grayle. Perhaps Judge Grayle is to Cissy Chandler as Mrs. Grayle is to Raymond Chandler. The much younger partner, still devoted to the older spouse, each was seeking the romance and passion of others closer to their respective ages and with matching libidos.

A similar situation is implied in the case of General Stemwood and his two daughters. They are the products of his unsuccessful marriage to another much younger woman. Mrs. Stemwood is an absent character in the novel *The Big Sleep* (1939). It is implied that their two daughters carry her bad seed, and that the elderly and infirmed General Stemwood passively accepts their moral deviance. Cissy too was much infirmed in her later years, and whether or not she knew of Chandler's later dalliances, she certainly knew of some of his earlier ones. Was she willing to accommodate his infidelities?

Perhaps ironically Frank MacShane attributes the criminality and viciousness of many of Chandler's female characters toa form of feminism (1976: 54). By portraying women as having the capacity to be criminal, violent and deviously determined to have their way, Chandler is showing women as having strength and fortitude. They are not passive pawns of the men in their lives, but they successfully manipulate the men they encounter. They are strong, even courageous in pursuing their criminal objectives. Only the morally strong Philip Marlowe shows the ability to withstand the temptations and manipulations of these determined women.

So we have multiple explanations of why Raymond Chandler disproportionately frequently portrays women as criminals in his novels. Was Raymond Chandler simply fearful of women? Was he a "mamma's boy," who easily succumbed to the power of women over him? Was he a latent homosexual who scorned women? Did he create women characters modeled on his wife Cissy? Or did he invert his relationship with Cissy to provide a model for his cheating on women, a cheating Raymond Chandler? Was he writing as a precursor to feminism by creating strong women antagonists? The answer will forever remain ambiguous. Chandler cannot tell us now, and if he had while still living, could we be sure that his self-assessment would have been accurate? Whichever explanation for his negative depiction of women in his fiction one decides to accept, considering them all may give us clearer understanding of his literary contributions to American literature and the understanding of male-female relationships in mid-twentieth-century America.

The Chandler crime novels are characterized by that special appeal which is reflected in the desire of their readers to re-read his books again and again. He enriched the genre of the detective novel by revealing the dynamics of the

psychological states of his characters, both male and female. Chandler once stated that "the detective story for a variety reasons can seldom be promoted. It is usually about murder and hence lacks the elements of uplift" (Chandler 1994: 387). We cannot totally agree. The novels of Chandler certainly warrant promotion, in spite of their "noire" moods and lack of moral uplift. They offer opportunities to explore the soul - of the characters, of Chandler himself, and of ourselves.

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Ambiguity and the Grotesque: History, Humor, and McCarthyism in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*

Joseph Heller's political and social observations are an integral part of his fiction. One of America's most revered authors, Heller has been credited with a unique skill of getting "history and humor to work hand in hand" (Miller 1982:237). The novelist's scorching political passion manifests itself especially vividly in *Catch-22*, an indisputable classic, which unveils the writer's spirited mockery of the Cold War red-baiting.

At the novel's publication in 1961 a spate of critical attention followed introducing a variety of reviews and scholarly interpretations. However, those critics who give credit to the claim that Heller's *Catch-22* reflects the climate of postwar America offer no more than a passing acknowledgement of the influence of the McCarthy-driven events on the novel. Walter James Miller (1982: 238) treats *Catch-22* as "seemingly an attack on the military-industrial complex of World War II, [which] actually aims, through highly original use of anachronisms, to expose the entire power system of the postwar world." Further in his article, Miller (1982: 240) mentions "controversies rampant in the Eisenhower Administration (1953-1961)" and points to Heller's technique of "creating fictional events in one period of time (World War II) that parodied actual events that would not occur until a later period (the 1950s)." Robert Brustein (qtd. in Aldridge 1987: 380), writing in the *New Republic*, perceives the book's Air Force setting in World War II as a metaphor of "a satirical microcosm for many of the macrocosmic idiocies" afflicting the postwar era. In fact, Joan Robertson's essay "They're After Everyone: Heller's *Catch-22* and the Cold War" (1989: 41-50) is one of the few instances in which the critic holds the view that Heller's treatment of McCarthyism was by no means coincidental and that a fully comprehensive study of the novel's grounding in the McCarthy years is still lacking.

In this paper I will argue that in *Catch-22* the writer uses his razor-sharp wit to lure his readers into unexpected confrontations with McCarthyism, satirizing anticommunist rhetoric of the later years of the Truman administration. Replete with literary allusions, quotations, and misquotations, the book is to be seen

here as a vicious comment on the then-current excesses of McCarthy's ideology. Its characters get entangled both by means of propaganda of the deed and word-level propaganda in persecutions characteristic of the 1950s America. Most effective are Heller's references to the Major Peress case, the McCarran-Walter Act, loyalty oaths, and an overall feeling of fear. Propagandistic tools of the time, such as *guilt by association* as well as other attention-getters of the era, come up for ridicule in Heller's depiction of false testimonies, investigations, and trials.

Historically, McCarthyism dominated the U.S. political scene as well as other sectors of American life in the years 1947-1957. The Republican senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin and his reckless charges of subversion in government and elsewhere succeeded in creating a culture of fear, distrust, and disunity in postwar America. By charging that various federal and nongovernmental agencies harbor Communist employees, McCarthy has become the central figure of unprecedented political turmoil, and his practice of publicizing accusations of disloyalty or subversion gave the decade its name. McCarthyism as a political "ism" has entered the historical lexicon to refer to a political style or methods that cross the bounds of decency. Most historians judge McCarthy to have been a demagogue who made false and misleading charges and identify the anticommunist investigations and hearings of the late 1940s and early 1950s as a shameful episode in American life during which an allegedly nonexistent Communist threat was used to pillory innocent people for their political beliefs. Referring to what many researchers have denigrated as an overreaction to Soviet subversion espionage, Irving Horowitz (1996: 101) points out that "despite the existence of a few genuinely brilliant works on the subject of McCarthyism, the nature of the man and of the period he presumably represented remains elusive." Whether there were grounds for Heller's treatment of McCarthyism as a solely laughable and condemnable concept is another vital matter that is to be seen.

One of the writer's most obvious and most frequently cited satirizations of the McCarthy years is the description of Major Major. Because his first name is Major, an IBM machine reads that as his rank. Major Major's promotion is a clear reference to Major Irving Peress, a dentist, who in 1953 had been forced to accept a discharge from the Army for refusing to discuss his possible leftist political associations. When asked about the character, Joseph Heller admitted that Major Major was certainly drawn from the events of the era. He made it clear when he said: "I took a paragraph straight out of the news reports and slipped it into the chapter about Major Major" (Merrill 1992: 150).

Indeed, in September and October of 1953, McCarthy began making the headlines when he focused his attention on accusations of espionage activities associated with the Army Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. The Army Signal Corps installation at Fort Monmouth was one of the nation's most vital security posts for the three research centers housed there were engaged in developing defensive devices designed to protect the United States from an atomic attack. Julius Rosenberg, a central figure in the U.S. espionage history, worked as an inspector at the military laboratories from 1940 to 1945 and maintained his Signal Corps contacts for at least two years following his departure. In the period 1949-1953, the FBI had been warning the Army about security risks at Monmouth, but the Army paid little or no attention to the reports of subversion until the McCarthy investigation began in 1953. The so-called Army-McCarthy hearings, held in Washington, were based on documents and information sent to the senator by military and government officials as well as on the testimony of people who had left signal-corps related work soon after the war. In December of 1953, the senator was tipped off regarding the case of Irving Peress. He found out that, due to the military bureaucracy foul-up, one office was seeking Peress's removal for his taking the Fifth Amendment[1] and failing to answer questions on the Army's Loyalty Certificate, while another office had automatically promoted him. McCarthy labeled the promotion of the Army dentist the "key to the deliberate Communist infiltration of our armed forces" (qtd. in Robertson 1989:46) and demanded a court martial. The rallying cry in this case was *Who promoted Major Peress?* In *Catch-22* the Army gives private Major an immediate promotion and makes him Major Major so that "Congressmen with nothing else on their minds could go trotting back and forth through the streets of Washington, D.C., chanting, 'Who promoted Major Major? Who promoted Major Major?'" (Heller 1994: 113).[2]

Heller placed the Major on the faculty of an insignificant university. Major Major's suspicious background caught the attention of the FBI and his selection of English history over American history is considered a truly subversive action. Instantaneously, Major's patriotism is under scrutiny and his record smeared

[1] The clause from the Fifth Amendment that says that a person shall "not be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself' became prominent in many investigations in the 1950s, especially of people accused of Communist activity. Although witnesses' refusal to answer questions often frustrated government investigators, this amendment clearly made it legal.

[2] Heller's choice of the phrase "Congressmen with nothing else on their minds" might be his indirect reference to the Republican-controlled 80th Congress under President Harry S. Truman whose achievements or lack thereof brought it a name of *do-nothing Congress* (also known as *Turnip Congress).*

with the accusations of Communist affiliation and homosexuality, all making him an inevitable peril to national security. This passage is significant enough to be quoted here:

> Since he had nothing better to do well in, he did well in school. At the state university he took his studies so seriously that he was suspected by the homosexuals of being a Communist and suspected by the Communists of being homosexual. He majored in English history, which was a mistake.
> "*English* history!" roared the silver-maned senior Senator from his state indignantly. "What's the matter with American history? American history is as good as any history in the world!"
> Major Major switched immediately to American literature, but not before the F.B.I. had opened a file on him. (Heller 1994: 113)[3]

Major Major's ill-defined un-American behavior calls to mind the House Un-American Activities Committee which, independent of McCarthy in action, but not in attitude, worked at combating Communism by picking it out in many spheres of the American life. In one of the episodes of *Catch-22,* Captain Black jumps to conclusions when he identifies the corporal conducting the educational sessions in Captain Black's intelligence tent as subversive "because he wore eyeglasses and used words like *panacea* and *utopia,* and because he disapproved of Adolf Hitler, who had done such a great job of combating un-American activities in Germany" (Heller 1994: 48). Later in the novel, Colonel Cathcart, working on his prayers-before-each-mission project, asks the chaplain to his office to help him perfect the idea. When the chaplain brings up the issue of atheism, Colonel Cathcart gets furious:

> "What atheists? [...] There are no atheists in my outfit! Atheism is against the law, isn't it?"
> "No, sir."
> "It isn't?" The colonel was surprised. "Then it's un-American, isn't it?"

[3] The sexual allusion seems intentional here. In the early Cold War years McCarthyites targeted sexual minorities as national security risks and the conviction that homosexuals were highly blackmailable went unquestioned until the 1980s (Leebaert 2002: 116). Many initiatives were undertaken in the name of resisting subversion by the governments of Canada, U.S. and the UK. The notorious 1950s homosexual dismissal cases were those of the American Communist conspirator James A. Mintkenbaugh, Dwight D. Eisenhower's spokesman Arthur Vandenberg, Jr., anticommunist columnist Joseph Alsop as well as British atomic bomb spies Guy Burgess, Anthony Blunt and bisexual Donald Maclean of The Cambridge Five. Homosexuals were also being expelled from the Communist ranks for fear that their vulnerability to blackmail might endanger their comrades.

> "I'm not sure, sir," answered the chaplain.
> "Well, I am!" the colonel declared. "I'm not going to disrupt our religious services just to accommodate a bunch of lousy atheists." (Heller 1994: 247)

Heller treats extensively minority groups and immigration issues in McCarthy's America by making indirect references to the McCarran-Walter Act. The McCarran Act of September 23, 1950 required the registration of Communist organizations with the Attorney General, forbade entry into the United States of anyone who belonged or had belonged to any totalitarian organizations, and provided for the detention centers for such people in the event of national emergencies. In June 1952 Congress passed McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act which listed being a Communist or Communist sympathizer as one of the 700 reasons to deny immigration. Suitably, in the novel, when Chief White Halfoat shares his story with Yossarian, he describes a group of his native American relatives who wandered into Canada and who, upon trying to re-enter the U.S., were stopped at the border by American immigration authorities who would not let them back in. Heller's wordplay is brilliant here: "They could not come back in because they were red" (Heller 1994: 61). In the first draft of the novel, as Robertson (1989: 43) reveals, the writer had stated it more plainly: "They could not come back in because of the McCarran-Walter Act."

The 1950s legislation in question was codified on the basis of a quota system. In his veto message to Congress, president Truman (qtd. in Hochman 1997:313) pointed out the inequities of the legislative draft which in his opinion boiled down to the statement that "Americans with English or Irish names were better people and better citizens than Americans with Italian or Greek or Polish names." This comes up for ridicule in the passage in which Colonel Cathcart is tangled up in a menacing problem of his own:

> The colonel sat back when he had finished and was extremely pleased with himself for the prompt action he had just taken to meet this sinister crisis. *Yossarian* - the very sight of the name made him shudder. There were so many esses in it. It just had to be subversive. It was like the word *subversive* itself. It was like *seditious* and *insidious* too, and like *socialist, suspicious, fascist* and *Communist.* It was an odious, alien, distasteful name, that just did not inspire confidence. It was not at all like such clean, crisp, honest, American names as Cathcart, Peckem and Dreedle.
> (Heller 1994: 268)

Personal attacks, the violation of privacy that resulted from red-baiting, and an overall feeling of harassment are used by Heller as a subtext throughout his novel. In *Catch-22* the characters are set in a climate of secret informants

in which reason gives way to hysteria, trust to suspicion and friendship to self-preservation. In a meaningful scene, ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen confides to Yossarian:

> "We'd probably shoot you," ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen replied.
> *"We?"* Yossarian cried in surprise. "What do you mean, *we?* Since when are you on their side?"
> "If you're going to be shot, whose side do you expect me to be on?"
>
> (Heller 1994: 79)

In McCarthy's America charges were frequently made based on widely publicized, dubious or selectively documented evidence. At one point in McCarthy's political career, the senator suggested that a person must be guilty if there was no information to state otherwise (Anderson and May 1953: 186). This *guilt by association* technique is clearly evident in Heller's handling of the Action Board and its investigatory methods. Clevinger's case, of whom Lieutenant Scheisskopf knew he "might cause trouble if he wasn't watched" (Heller 1994: 106) was open and shut. As the narrator explains, Clevinger "was guilty, of course, or he would not have been accused, and [...] the only way to prove it was to find him guilty" (Heller 1994: 106). In his hearings, the senator of Wisconsin would often transform some minor point into an overwhelming proof of a person's guilt. Suitably, Clevinger's accidental stumbling on the parade field becomes "breaking ranks while in formation, felonious assault, indiscriminate behavior, mopery, high treason, provoking, being a smart guy, listening to classical music and so on" (Heller 1994: 100).

In Heller's novel numerous characters are exposed to McCarthyite smear tactics. Corporal Popinjay, Yossarian, Major Major and others are all damned by innuendo. Significantly, the very first chapter of the novel opens with Dunbar and Yossarian's allegations regarding the soldier in white. The comical effect is doubled when the reader learns that the Texan, who is under their attack, was so good-natured, generous and likeable that "in three days no one could stand him" (Heller 1994: 16):

> "Murderer," Dunbar said quietly.
> The Texan looked up at him with an uncertain grin.
> "Killer," Yossarian said.
> "What are you fellas talkin' about?" the Texan asked nervously.
> "You murdered him," said Dunbar.
> "You killed him," said Yossarian.
> The Texan shrank back. "You fellas are crazy. I didn't even touch him."
> "You murdered him," said Dunbar.

"I heard you kill him," said Yossarian.
"You killed him because he was a nigger," Dunbar said.
"You fellas are crazy," the Texan cried. "They don't allow niggers in here. They got a special place for niggers."
"The sergeant smuggled him in," Dunbar said.
"The Communist sergeant," said Yossarian.
"And you knew it." (Heller 1994: 17-18)

In his probably most infamous speech, which he delivered in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 9, 1950, McCarthy (qtd. in Morgan 2003: 384-5) said: "I have in my hand a list of 205 - a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State [Dean Acheson] as being members of the Communist Party and who, nevertheless, are still working and shaping the policy in the State Department." Three days later the 205 Communists became 57 card-carrying Communists.[4] The number was subsequently altered to 81.

This landmark event of McCarthyism is incorporated in *Catch-22* when the meek Chaplain R. O. Shipman becomes a target of harassment. Heller's reference to the incidents that have taken place since the advent of McCarthyism, the term being often synonymous with the Age of Accusation, is highly readable in the trial which abounds in the overwhelming pieces of evidence that the interrogator begins pulling one after another from a manila folder. In the lexicon so reminiscent of the 1950s verbiage, the colonel declares: "I have here in my hands another statement from Colonel Cathcart in which he swears that you refused to co-operate with him in conducting prayer meetings in the briefing room before each mission" (Heller 1994:486). Or, "I have here another affidavit from Colonel Cathcart that states you told him atheism was not against the law" (Heller 1994: 486). Or, "I have a signed statement here from Colonel Cathcart asserting you stole that plum tomato from him" (Heller 1994: 485). Or, "I have a notarized affidavit from Sergeant Whitcomb [...]" (Heller 1994: 485), etc. Not surprisingly, all the official statements are either fabricated proofs or documents obtained from false witnesses whom their commanding officers can easily make swear anything.

As the novel unfolds, the colonels charge the chaplain with "a very serious crime" of which they "don't know yet but [...] are going to find out" (Heller 1994: 480). Soon before the trial Chaplain Shipman is tipped off by Corporal Whitcomb and leams about his alleged crimes:

[4] In McCarthy's words: "I have in my hand 57 cases of individuals who would appear to be either card-carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy" (qtd. in Hochman 1997: 314).

> “They’re going to crack down on you for signing Washington Irving’s name to all those letters you’ve been signing Washington Irving’s name to. How do you like that?”
> “I haven’t been signing Washington Irving’s name to any letters,” said the chaplain.
> “You don’t have to lie to me,” Corporal Whitcomb answered. “I’m not the one you have to convince.”
> “But I’m not lying.”
> “I don’t care whether you’re lying or not. They’re going to get you for intercepting Major Major’s correspondence, too. A lot of this stuff is classified information.”
> “What correspondence?’ asked the chaplain plaintively in rising exasperation. “I’ve never even seen any of Major Major’s correspondence.”
> “You don’t have to lie to me,” Corporal Whitcomb replied. “I’m not the one you have to convince.”
> “But I’m not lying!” protested the chaplain. [...]
> Corporal Whitcomb was incensed. “I’m the best friend you’ve got and you don’t even know it,” he asserted belligerently, and walked out of the chaplain’s tent. He walked back in. “I’m on your side and you don’t even realize it. Don’t you know what serious trouble you’re in? That C.I.D. man has gone rushing back to the hospital to write a brand-new report on you about that tomato.”
> “What tomato?” the chaplain asked, blinking.
> “The plum tomato you were hiding in your hand when you first showed up here. There it is. The tomato you’re still holding in your hand right this very minute!”
> The chaplain unclenched his fingers with surprise and saw he was still holding the plum tomato he had obtained in Colonel Cathcart’s office. He set it down quickly on the bridge table. “I got this tomato from Colonel Cathcart,” he said, and was struck by how ludicrous his explanation sounded. “He insisted I take it.”
> “You don’t have to lie to me,” Corporal Whitcomb answered. “I don’t care whether you stole it from him or not.”
> “Stole it?” the chaplain exclaimed with amazement. “Why should I want to steal a plum tomato?”
> “That’s exactly what had us both stumped,” said Corporal Whitcomb. “And then the C.I.D. man figured out you might have some important secret papers hidden away inside it.”
> The chaplain sagged limply beneath the mountainous weight of his despair. “I don’t have any important papers hidden away inside it,” he stated simply. “I didn’t even want it to begin with. Here, you can have it and see for yourself.”
>
> (Heller 1994: 262-4)

Clearly, the memorable scene is Heller’s reference to the famed Hiss pumpkin. The historic Alger Hiss Case appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee from 1948 through 1950. The former American public

official Alger Hiss was accused by Whittaker Chambers, a self-confessed Soviet agent and a longtime editor of the weekly newsmagazine *Time,* of having been a secret Communist between 1934 and 1938. Denying that he had ever even known Chambers, Hiss was convicted for perjury by a second trial in January 1950 and sentenced to a five-year prison term. In this notorious case, at a pretrial hearing, Chambers produced a selection of classified material and on December 2,1948 he led HU AC investigators to his Maryland farm, where from a hollowed-out pumpkin he exhibited several microfilm rolls of documents he said had been given to him by Hiss. The far-famed *pumpkin papers* turned out to be either blank microfilms or altogether unimportant technical documents.

Finally, Captain Black is cast as a man of McCarthy's caliber and his Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade reflects the spirit of the early Cold-War years. Loyalty oaths originated from a new loyalty program *(Loyalty Probes)* instituted by President Harry S. Truman on March 22, 1947. The Executive Order 9835 inaugurated a loyalty check of all federal employees by the Civil Service Commission and the FBI. This was a nationwide initiative and hundreds of loyalty boards were set up across the country. A Loyalty Review Board coordinated dismissal procedures and supervised the overall program. The standard for dismissal was the existence of "reasonable grounds [...] for belief that the person involved is disloyal to the Government of the United States" (Fried 1991: 68). The loyalty ordinance required each employee to execute an affidavit stating whether or not they have ever been "members of or affiliated with any group, society, association, organization or party which advises, advocates or teaches [...] the overthrow by force, violence or other unlawful means of the Government of the United States of America" (Fried 1997:108). As a university professor, Heller himself ostensibly signed the required loyalty oath.

In *Catch-22* the loyalty crusade is taken to absurd lengths. When in full swing, it makes all the squadron men sign the oaths "to get their pay from the finance officer, to obtain their PX supplies, to have their hair cut by the Italian barbers" (Heller 1994: 147). Captain Black's reasoning is the following: "The more loyalty oaths a person signed, the more loyal he was" (Heller 1994: 148). Any further modifications of the campaign, such as Continual Reaffirmation, the purpose of which was to "trap all those men who had become disloyal since the last time they had signed a loyalty oath the day before" (Heller 1994: 149), add up to the whole soapbox patriotism and render any emergency operations in the base utterly impossible. Like senator McCarthy and his associates' artful maneuvers, Captain Black's dogged politics increases the displeasure and consternation of his superiors. Infuriated by the ardent

crusader's tactics, Colonel Korn reports: "It's that idiot Black off on a patriotism binge [...] the best thing you can do is [...] hope he drops dead before he does too much damage" (Heller 1994: 150).

Historically, McCarthy was able to capitalize upon the climate of fear which he had in fact used in two ways. Edward R. Murrow's report on senator McCarthy in the now-famous provocative news program *See It Now* categorized that fear cogently into the fear of Communism that led people to listen to McCarthy's charges, and the fear of being blacklisted by the senator which intimidated people from speaking out against him.[5] Through the long lens of history, McCarthyism still remains a controversial and complex phenomenon. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of new archival sources have become available to the public which throw much-needed light on the McCarthy era. Released in the late 1990s, the Venona transcripts are forcing the revision of many of the prevailing myths about the internal threat of Communism to American democracy. Some 2,900 intercepted and decoded Soviet messages prove that there was a large scale Communist penetration of the U.S. government and that Communist spies passed on valuable information to the KGB. The deciphered cables identify 349 citizens, immigrants and permanent residents of the United States who had had a covert relationship with Soviet intelligence agencies. John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr (1999: 9), authors of *Venona. Decoding Soviet Espionage in America,* presume that American cryptanalysts in the Venona Project deciphered only a fraction of the Soviet intelligence traffic and that "it [is] only logical to conclude that many additional agents were discussed in the thousands of unread messages."

The predominant view among American literati, most of them of liberal or leftist beliefs, was that the concern about domestic Communism in the late 1940s and 1950s was without justification. The culture of fear attracted attention of those who were affected by McCarthy's assaults as well as those who wrote on McCarthyism from the post-Cold War perspective. A gallery of red hunters caricatured by Joseph Heller appear and reappear in the works of Arthur Miller, Norman Mailer, Lillian Hellman, Mary McCarthy, Howard Fast, Robert Coover, E. L. Doctorow, Philip Roth, Tony Kushner and others. Heller himself pointed out repeatedly that his unreal novel reflects real themes. In one of the interviews the writer referred to his work as a "novel of comment" in which

[5] For a fuller treatment of Murrow's report see O'Connor (1987: 5-16). Murrow's probably most famous broadcast of March 9, 1954, which focused on the threat to American liberties posed by the activities of the Wisconsin senator, is often credited with having significantly contributed to Joseph R. McCarthy's downfall.

"there are comments about the loyalty oath, about the free enterprise system, about civil rights, about bureaucracy, about patriotism" (Krassner 1992: 8). When asked about his political philosophy and major influences for *Catch-22*, he said unambiguously:

> It's the idea of being charged with something and not knowing what it is [...]. The thing that inspired that was the congressional hearings that were going on then - this was the period of McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee. We had state committees as well as loyalty oaths [...]. I wanted to create an impression of our society at that time and with a literary consciousness. That's why the book is replete with literary allusions and quotations or misquotations.
>
> (Heller qtd. in Gold 1992: 59)

To conclude, just as the writer's parody of McCarthyism in *Catch-22* remains clearly evident, his crucial point seems ambiguous. Following the conception delineated by Klehr, Haynes and Firsov (1995: 326-7), who said that "the situation in America in the late 1940s and 1950s was much more complicated than is suggested by the view that an idealistic, innocent Communist movement was persecuted by a paranoid security apparatus. Although many innocent people were harassed, the secret world of the CPUSA made such excesses possible," Heller tempts the reader to trace darkening tones within the novel where all seemingly clear-cut distinctions become blurred. Most characters may just as well be perceived as both oppressors and victims of circumstances, and the common acceptance of the image of the military industrial complex as the only enemy is just a partial truth. Yossarian, Dunbar, Wintergreen, Milo, Korn, Black, Cathcart, Scheisskopf, Dreedle, Major Major, Clevinger, and Nately all thrive on abuse, recrimination, and slander - a confirmation of a slogan which Heller (qtd. in Merrill 1996: 151) seems to be endorsing for all its ambiguity and grotesque: "we have met the enemy, and it is us."

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The Legacy of Samuel Beckett in Paul Auster's Work

Beckett's presence can be strongly sensed in Auster's work, especially in his early novels. It seems to me unmistakable in *The New York Trilogy* (1987), *In the Country of Last Things* (1987) and in the fascinating biography of his father, *The Invention of Solitude* (1982), which I find a remarkable work. These works have a sparseness and an abstract quality which encourage a sense of being plunged into an atmosphere very reminiscent of the kind we meet in a Beckett text, with strong imagery of aloneness, of life lived at the margins, of deprivation and hunger. Yet when we move onto a novel such as *Moon Palace* (1989), which can be described as a "baggy monster" in relation to its range of characters, its diverse settings, its embedded narratives and breadth of vision, references to Beckett's work are still strongly present, and I am thinking especially of allusions to *Endgame* (1958).

I think it is important to recognize that Auster has his own voice, and his own specific themes and situations which he returns to again and again. Family relationships are very often examined, especially the relationship (or more pertinently, the lack of one) between father and son, explored with such poetic intensity in *The Invention of Solitude.* Hunger and solitude become an intrinsic part of his wider interest in journeys and quests, allowing a inward journey into the psyche, which provides an opportunity to explore and discover identity while displaced from the world of competition, consumerism and the various ways that the outer world forces us to ignore and reject the inner self in the ongoing struggle to make a living, make a "success" of our lives. His work often features journeys, money gained and money lost, chance and coincidence, love and death, and mysteries without solutions.

It seems to me that Beckett holds an important place in Auster's development as a writer, and this is especially true in the early stages. I am going to begin by discussing an early play, which Auster himself describes as a bit of a disaster, "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven" (written 1976/77; published in *Hand to Mouth* in 1997) which is somehow too close to Beckett, too derivative, in the sense that it can be seen to have stifled his own artistry and his own

imagination. In order to find a voice of his own Auster needed to get further away from Beckett. But this does happen, and rather triumphantly, later on. The early play is very much a reworking of *Waiting for Godot.* It is not a slavish reproduction, but it is hedged around on all sides by what appears as a need, conscious or not, to write a play like Beckett, or more particularly, a play like *Godot.* (It is interesting to recognize that Beckett chose never to write a play quite like *Godot* again). I think we need to go to *The Music of Chance* to find "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven," completely refashioned and reconceptualized, resurfacing within the novel form, and now really working on its own terms. The original play can be glimpsed lying beneath and operating as a central core of the narrative. It is a fascinating revision, and in a sense we come full circle in that the novel was adapted into a film (directed by Peter Haas, 1993), and very effectively. It still holds onto its strangeness and mystery, a feat not always pulled off when experimental fiction is converted into film. And Beckett is still there, but by 1990, when the novel was first published, Auster's own voice has developed and moved further towards what is unmistakably his. It clarifies that he used Beckett, in a sense, as a mentor, learned from him and moved forward. Beckett could have been a dangerous influence, and blocked this movement forward, but instead, for Auster, he was a place to start from, to develop from, as he created his own voice.

"Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven" was one of three plays written during a six-month stay in Berkeley in 1976. In *Hand to Mouth* Auster (1998: 101) writes that

> The farthest thing from my mind was to do anything with them in a practical sense. As far as I was concerned, they were hardly more than spare, minimalist exercises, an initial stab at something. [...]

But John Bernard Myers decided to stage the Laurel and Hardy play. It was not a success. The version published in *Hand to Mouth* is the result of a thorough reworking. Auster (1998: 104-5) considers that

> The performances had been only part of the problem, and I wasn't about to palm off responsibility for what had happened on the director or the actors. The play was far too long, I realized, too rambling and diffuse, and radical surgery was needed to mend it. I began chopping and trimming, hacking away at everything that felt weak or superfluous. [...]

It is still not great drama, but does hold interest, and I do admire Auster's decision to publish it.

It is useful to consider the play in relation to *Godot*, and I will put forward a few ideas about links that can be made between the two plays. "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven" is a two-hander: the two characters are described as "Stan Laurel, a builder of walls; Oliver Hardy, a builder of walls" (Auster 1998: 109). Thus, immediately we are introduced to them, the characters are defined by what they do. Unlike *Godot* this will be a play in which something will be done, where something happens: a wall is built. The stage is bare, apart from a "heap of stones," which might well bring to mind the "abode of stones," a phrase so often repeated in Lucky's tirade. I visualize the two actors as looking as much like Laurel and Hardy as possible. This would provoke strong expectations in the audience, especially signalling the kind of comedy that is associated with this famous double act. Here is how the play begins:

> *Laurel enters right. Slowly, cautiously, as if in a daze. He is wearing denim overalls and work boots and carries a satchel over his shoulder. A bowler hat sits on his head. He stops, turns, and stares back in the direction he has just come from.*
> *Hardy enters left. Same clothing, same satchel, same bowler hat. He moves purposefully, crossing the stage with great strides. In the dimness he crushes into Laurel from behind. They both fall down, groaning.* (Auster 1998: 109)

The two characters are clearly distinguished by their movements and body language: one cautious, the other purposeful. This also brings to mind the characters in Act Without Words II (1959), which also fits in with the focus on doing, rather than waiting, in this play. And the dialogue begins:

> HARDY: *(Recovering. Touching Laurel's face.)* Is it you?
> LAUREL: Yes, yes. *(Pause.)* I think so. *(Doubtful, touching his face.)* Is it me?
> HARDY: Yes. Of course it's you.
> LAUREL: And you? Are you you?
> HARDY: Yes. Of course I'm me. *(Pause.)* I'm me, and you're you.
> LAUREL: It looks like we're both here, then, doesn't it?
> HARDY: *(Standing up, stretching. Enthusiastically.)* And so... another day begins.
> LAUREL: You don't have to be so happy about it.
> HARDY: *(Stops. Seriously.)* You shouldn't talk like that. You know I'm not happy.
> LAUREL: You certainly look happy. You certainly sound happy.
> HARDY: That's what we call "putting up a good front." It's a way of tricking myself into being something other than what I really am. *(Pause. Brightly.)* I pretend. *(Begins walking toward the heap of stones.)* (Auster 1998: 109-10)

And that's enough to give you the idea. If you are like me you may well be groaning at this stage, alongside the characters, because it does have that off-

putting flavour of a none-too-expert stab at "doing Beckett." It reminds me of the opening of Act 2 of *Godot.* I'm trying my best to "see" it as a performance. This is Laurel and Hardy, not Didi and Gogo, and if the actors play this aspect up sufficiently there is plenty of room for comedy, but on the page none of this comes alive for me. It is not a comic play in any straightforward sense, and maybe, like *Godot,* it could be termed a tragicomedy. There are many direct, as well as less direct echoes: "This can't go on" (Auster 1998: 141); "Do you think we're alive?" (Auster 1998: 143); "Has it ever occurred to you that we're already dead?" (Auster 1998: 153); "Do you think someone is watching us?" (Auster 1998: 158); "Nothing is going to happen" (Auster 1998: 164). Auster has, however, chosen to have two trees rather than one (Auster 1998: 147). There are hints that this is some kind of purgatory, that the two characters are being punished for unnamed sins. "Heaven," it would appear, is a gloomy, barren place, full of toil and suffering.

It could be suggested that this is a kind of sequel to *Godot.* The two characters have at last met Godot, and he has set them a task: to build a wall. And they do build a wall. No reason is given for this, and it is possible that they build this same wall every day. But at the end of the play, when darkness falls, the wall has been built. Something has been done.

I think it is only when "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven" is looked at again from the new perspective provided by *The Music of Chance* that this "spare minimalist exercise" begins to gain an identity of its own. This novel has this early play embedded within it, but the abstractions have been concretized, fleshed out, and to some extent, made explicable. But there is still a mystery at the core, and although many questions are answered, many are not, and new questions are posed. *Godot* can also be glimpsed, almost unrecognizable now, but still holding an important place. The two main characters, Pozzi and Nashe, could be read as allusions to Pozzo and Lucky, but they are more akin to Didi and Gogo. We witness their first meeting, unlike the characters in *Godot* and "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven." Pozzi has been beaten, but we are told why and by whom. Things are being explained to us. Things would seem to be making sense. As I have suggested, certain abstractions have been concretized for us, but mysteries remain. There is an underlying sense of threat and an uneasiness that is reminiscent of *Godot.* In *Godot* Gogo and Didi discuss salvation, and Didi's suggestion: "Suppose we repented" is met with Estragon's questions: "Repented what?" "Our being bom?" (Beckett 1978: 11). Such an idea is unsettling within the bleak atmosphere of the play, and it is very definitely present in Auster's novel. The ideas of having "no rights" (Beckett 1978: 19),

of being punished (Beckett 1978: 93) and, alternatively, the prospect of being "saved" (Beckett 1978:94), which go so far in creating that strangely fascinating sense of threat in *Godot*, when they resurface in *The Music of Chance* - which is, in so many ways, so different in its richness, colour, movement and interest - still retain their power. There is a bleakness underlying the surface vibrancy, a dark allegory concerning punishment, retribution, somehow to do with the sin of having been bom.

My thesis is that there is a perceptible line that links the three texts, leading from *Godot* to "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven" to *The Music of Chance.* Auster's fascination with the idea of two characters being punished, seemingly forever, by being forced to build a wall, a futile purposeless wall, was not filed away in his desk along with the play. He returned to it. He spoke about how he "couldn't get rid of the idea. It plagued me and haunted me for [...] years"; "the wall - those stones had been standing inside me for years" (Auster 1996: 153). The task was how to place this central image within a novel. How would he get the characters into this situation? How could it happen in a way that could be made acceptable within a prose fiction format? And this is what *The Music of Chance* achieves. A set of circumstances, chance and coincidence, bring the two protagonists together at just that moment when they can be of use to each other: "It was one of those random, accidental encounters that seem to materialize out of thin air" (Auster 1992: 1). It could be suggested, as it could with "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven," that they meet their Godot - in this case, in Flower and Stone. Flower and Stone are not Pozzo and Lucky, although Flower's overbearing and self-satisfied demeanour is reminiscent of Pozzo. Flower and Stone are the god-like figures who mete out the punishment: paternal but without love; absent, but unfailing in their power to control, to create suffering and to deny freedom.

I am particularly interested in this idea of punishment. It is the central focus of "Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven." The building of the wall seems completely futile and pointless, as we are given no sense of the purpose of the wall. Laurel suggests they stop building it:

> LAUREL: If we stopped working now, if we both just refused to go on, don't you think it would force them to act? (Auster 1998: 158)

We are kept in the dark as to who or what "them" refers to. But Hardy decides that if they (Laurel and Hardy) do stop "they" (the unnamed persecutors) would "give us more work tomorrow to make up for it" (Auster 1998: 158). So whoever "they" are, it seems, they are relentless in their persecution, and

there is no escaping the hard, exhausting work. In *The Music of Chance* Pozzi and Nashe are forced to build a wall to settle a gambling debt. As soon as the question of how they will repay what they owe is raised, the idea of punishment is also put forward: "A punishment would have to be meted out, that was certain" (Auster 1992: 105). Nashe compares their predicament to being in prison (Auster 1992: 119); he will be "like some convict sentenced to a term of hard labor" (Auster 1992: 127). But Nashe also sees building the wall as a chance of salvation. He says nothing to Pozzi

> about what truly concerned him - nothing about the struggle to put his life together again, nothing about how he saw the wall as a chance to redeem himself in his own eyes, nothing about how he welcomed the hardships of the meadow as a way to atone for his recklessness and self-pity [...]. (Auster 1992: 127)

It seems to me to be a strange reaction. He seems to be welcoming the task as a punishment that will involve atonement and bring redemption. Again the building of the wall, as in the play, seems quite futile. Flower and Stone bought a ruined Irish castle on a visit to Ireland, basically just a heap of stones, and had it shipped back to America. Their plan is, not to have the castle rebuilt, but to have the stones built into a wall that will be situated diagonally across a field. Flower envisages it as "a monument":

> "Rather than try to reconstruct the castle, we're going to turn it into a work of art. To my mind, there's nothing more mysterious or beautiful than a wall. I can already see it: standing out there in the meadow, rising up like some enormous barrier against time. It will be a memorial to itself, gentleman, a symphony of resurrected stones, and every day it will sing a dirge for the past we carry within us."
> "A Wailing Wall," Nashe said. (Auster 1992: 86)

So we see that this wall is endowed with huge symbolic significance, including religious resonances. We also discover that the name of the man who will be in charge of the work has the ominous name of Calvin. It will be a "monument," "a work of art," "a barrier against time," "a symphony." The only utilitarian purpose this wall has is the "educational value"; it is "something that will teach the culprits a lesson" (Auster 1992: 105). But what are these "culprits" being punished for? For losing at cards? And why does Nashe welcome the punishment? I think that, in order to try and shed some light on these questions, it is interesting to consider a theme often returned to in Auster's work: the absent father.

When Nashe learns of his father's death "he had not seen his father in over thirty years" (Auster 1992: 2). His father had walked out when he was two.

Nashe's wife has left him, and their two-year-old daughter is now living with Nashe's sister. His mother died four years ago. Against this background Nashe discovers that his father has left him "a colossal sum - close to two hundred thousand dollars" (Auster 1992: 2). Nashe considers it "a peculiar way to make amends" (Auster 1992: 3). This is true. The father has absented himself from his children's lives, and this can never be "amended." There is a strange parallel in Pozzi's childhood. He can remember meeting his father only twice in his life: once when he was eight, once when he was "eleven, maybe twelve" (Auster 1992: 40). On both occasions he turns up in a big Cadillac and gives him a hundred-dollar bill - again "a peculiar way to make amends" for his absence.

Reading *The Invention of Solitude* provides very strong evidence of why the idea of an absent father has such an important place in Auster's work. Auster writes about his father directly after his death. He tells us:

> Even before his death he had been absent, and long ago the people closest to him had learned to accept this absence, to treat it as the fundamental quality of his being. (Auster 1989: 6)

> It was never possible for him to be where he was. For as long as he lived, he was somewhere else, between here and there. But never really here. And never really there. (Auster 1989: 19)

It is a fascinating story, not least, for me, because there is so much in his portrait of his father that reminds me of my own. His words: "You do not stop hungering after your father's love, even after you are grown up" (Auster 1989: 19) affect me deeply, and this strikes me as a statement of truth, along with all the enormity of the feelings it involves, including a sense of failure, loss, a fundamental feeling of not being good enough, somehow not being authenticated. I would take the statement further, to suggest that this hunger does not stop, even after your father's death. It then moves from hungering after the impossible to hungering after the totally impossible. "From the beginning, it seems," Auster recognizes, "I was looking for my father. Looking frantically for anyone who resembled him" (Auster 1989: 21). He speaks of a "craving" (Auster 1989: 21) and "a desire to do something extraordinary, to impress him with an act of heroic proportions" (Auster 1989: 23). He cannot really believe in the man his father appears to be,

> so implacably neutral on the surface [...] who lacked feeling, who wanted so little of others. And if there was not such a man, that means that there was another man,

> a man hidden inside the man who was not there, and the trick of it, then, was to find him. On the condition that he is there to be found.
> To recognize, right from the start, that the essence of this project is failure.
> (Auster 1989: 20)

He realizes that his parents' relationship is loveless, and considers his own conception: "a passionless embrace, a blind, dutiful groping between chilly hotel sheets [which] has never failed to humble me into an awareness of my own contingency" (Auster 1989: 18). It is a powerful and moving account of an absent father who "was never really there."

If we consider again Auster's recognition that "From the beginning, it seems, I was looking for my father. Looking frantically for anyone who resembled him" (Auster 1989: 21), I think we can gain an insight into Nashe's own quest for some kind of salvation. After his father's death, Nashe's life changes. This can be related to Auster's own experience. At a time when, Auster recalls, "I don't think I've ever been closer to feeling that I was at the end of my rope" he leams of his father's death, and his inheritance; "The money changed everything for me; it set my life on an entirely different course" (Auster 1996: 128). He considers that "In some sense, all the novels I've written have come out of that money my father gave me":

> It's impossible to sit down and write without thinking about it. It's a terrible equation, finally. To think that my father's death saved my life. (Auster 1996: 132)

With Nashe the result of the inheritance does not bring about this kind of rebirth, or salvation, yet when Nashe's feelings are described we have a strange mix of allusions to death and life, and to a detonation, a "big bang":

> He felt like a man who had finally found the courage to put a bullet through his head - but in this case the bullet was not death, it was life, it was the explosion that triggers the birth of new worlds. (Auster 1992: 10)

But in a very real sense he is turning his back on life. One by one he discards all the people and things that have given him rootedness and a reason for living. He decides to leave his daughter with his sister, becoming an absent father himself; he gives up his job, sells his house; he takes to the road in a new red two-door Saab 900. Is he looking for a father substitute? Is he escaping? The opening sentence of the novel describes his constant driving, constant movement: "For one whole year he did nothing but drive, traveling back and forth across America

as he waited for the money to run out" (Auster 1992: 1). It is aimless, continuous, with no apparent goal, "no definite plan" (Auster 1992: 11).

> Speed was of the essence, the joy of sitting in the car and hurtling himself forward through space. That became a good beyond all others, a hunger to be fed at any price. Nothing around him lasted for more than a moment, and as one moment followed another, it was as though he alone continued to exist. He was a fixed point in a whirl of changes, a body poised in utter stillness as the world rushed through him and disappeared. The car became a sanctum of invulnerability, a refuge in which nothing could hurt him anymore. As long as he was driving, he carried no burdens, was unencumbered by even the slightest particle of his former life. That is not to say that memories did not rise up in him, but they no longer seemed to bring any of the old anguish. (Auster 1992: 11-12)

This speaks of escape. The car is a "refuge" from the world. He is, in a sense, absenting himself from life, and from the "old anguish." It is possible to read this constant driving, constant movement, as creating the kind of absence Auster recognized in his father: "he was somewhere else, between here and there. But never really here. And never really there" (Auster 1989: 19). Auster has described the "true subject" of *The Music of Chance* as an exploration of the "question of freedom" (Auster 1996: 153), and has also stated that it is "a book about walls and slavery and freedom" (Auster 1996: 122). "Little by little," we are told, Nashe "had fallen in love with his new life of freedom and irresponsibility" (Auster 1992: 11), but the car, his "refuge" from the world is also a kind of cage, whilst the endless driving is also a kind of enslavement. In time the money begins to run out, and Nashe is forced back into the world; something must be done, and the card game between Pozzi and Flower and Stone would seem to be the answer, in order to ensure that the "freedom and irresponsibility" does not have to end. Auster speaks of how he "wanted to explore the implications of the windfall I had received after my father's death" in this novel (Auster 1996: 153), and the implications, in relation to Nashe, are very different from Auster's. Auster's movement is into creativity: life out of death; Nashe moves, it seems inexorably, from life into slavery and death. Freedom itself becomes like a kind of death: an absence from life.

Entering Flower and Stone's house is like entering an unreal world: "it was difficult for him not to think of the house as an illusion" (Auster 1992: 69). Pozzi has described Flower and Stone as like Laurel and Hardy:

> That's what I call them, Laurel and Hardy. One's fat and the other's thin, just like old Stan and Ollie. They're genuine pea-brains, my friend, a pair of poor chumps.
>
> (Auster 1992: 30)

Nashe recalls this description as they enter the house: "More than anything else it made him think of a movie set" (Auster 1992: 69). But Pozzi's assessment is only taking in their superficial appearance. They are not the Laurel and Hardy from Auster's play - these are the roles forced on Pozzi and Nashe - and there is something far more threatening about them than is ever apparent in the comic films of the actual Laurel and Hardy, as Nashe begins to recognize.

They are about to play a game of cards, an adult form of a play with a purpose: making money. But before they begin to play we learn how Flower and Stone spend a great deal of their time. Stone spends his time creating a miniature scale model of a city: "the City of the World" (Auster 1992: 79). Flower declaims that it "is more than just a toy" (Auster 1992: 79); there is a childlike quality to this occupation, but it goes further than this. In this house of illusion Stone has created a miniature world in which time is simultaneous: "Everything in it happens at once" (Auster 1992: 79). Ominously there is a prison, with prisoners "working happily at their various tasks [...]. They're glad they've been punished for their crimes" (Auster 1992: 80). It is, for Stone, "a utopia"; a model of how the world should be. Nashe can think of the model as "charming [...] deft and brilliant and admirable," but at the same time as "bizarre" and "totalitarian," with a "hint of violence, an atmosphere of cruelty and revenge" (Auster 1992: 87). When Nashe revisits the model, whilst the poker game is being played, he finds that

> the overriding mood was one of tenor, of dark dreams sauntering down the avenues in broad daylight. A threat of punishment seemed to hang in the air.
>
> (Auster 1992: 96)

Flower is a collector: books, cigars, and finally, his "historical memorabilia" (Auster 1992: 82). Nashe finds this collection "curious," "a monument to trivia [...] with articles of such marginal value that Nashe wondered if it were not some kind of joke" (Auster 1992: 83). They are relics from the past, but

> It was all so random, so misconstrued, so utterly beside the point. Flower's museum was a graveyard of shadows, a demented shrine to the spirit of nothingness [...]. The fascination was simply for the objects as material things, and the way they had been wrenched out of any possible context, condemned by Flower to go on existing for no reason at all: defunct, devoid of purpose, alone in themselves now

> for the rest of time. It was the isolation that haunted Nashe, the image of irreducible separateness that burned into his memory, and no matter how hard he struggled, he never managed to break free of it. (Auster 1992: 84)

Here Nashe is having a premonition of his own situation in the near future. He will be "condemned by Flower to go on existing for no reason: defunct, devoid of purpose," just as Didi and Gogo seem condemned to wait for a Godot who never comes, and like Laurel and Hardy in the play, will be building a wall "for no reason at all," except to create a new object for Flower's collection. There is a blank space in Stone's City in which he plans to build a model of the house and grounds, which will include the wall, and there is the fascinating image in the film of Stone erecting his tiny replica wall simultaneously with the construction of the big wall by Pozzi and Nashe. This gives us a sense of the godlike quality Flower speaks of when he declares that "at times I feel that we've become immortal" (Auster 1992: 75). Nashe steals the little models of Flower and Stone from the City, but it is they who have "wrenched" Pozzi and Nashe out of their lives and "condemned" them to build their wall. Pozzi and Nashe, like the smiling convicts, will become a part of Stone's City. They will also be featured as inhabitants of an even smaller City, "a model of the model" (Auster 1992: 81). The image created here is of complete powerlessness, the shrinking to a miniature model of the self, followed by a further shrinking to an almost unimaginably tiny size; it has the quality of nightmare. Stone, in contrast, becomes magnified into a giant, all-powerful god, ruling over a world that he has reduced to a diminutive toy.

Flower and Stone seem "essentially harmless," but Nashe sees something darker behind the appearance. Stone, "whose manner was so humble and benign," has built a City with "an atmosphere of cruelty and revenge" (Auster 1992: 87). Flower is also "ambiguous": at times "sensible," at times "like a lunatic," the "mask" always seeming in danger of slipping (Auster 1992: 87). The dinner they are served before the card playing begins is "a kiddie banquet, a dinner fit for six-year-olds" (Auster 1992: 88). Flower and Stone appear at this point as "no more than grown-up children" (Auster 1992: 87), blunting some of Nashe's earlier feelings of unease. But it seems that Flower and Stone are lulling their guests into a false state of security, and even encouraging a regression into a childlike state. They are playing at being children, and it seems that this is infectious. When Nashe steals the little figures "it is the first time he has stolen anything since he was a little boy" (Auster 1992: 97). When Pozzi loses all their money, it seems clear that the play-acting has paid off. We now

see a very different Flower: “His expression made Nashe think of a high school principal sitting in his office with a couple of delinquent kids” (Auster 1992: 105). Flower is now seen, not as childlike, but in the position of a father figure. The roles have been reversed; the power dynamics are now clear.

Nashe’s compliance in the scheme of building a wall is surprising. He finds “himself giving in to the idea of the wall as the only solution to his predicament” (Auster 1992: 109). He is “giving in”; he sees it as “almost a relief to have the decision taken out of his hands” (Auster 1992: 110). It is “a chance to redeem himself,” “a way to atone” (Auster 1992: 127) - but atone for what? There is a strong suggestion of Pozzi and Nashe being forced back into childhood. The ten thousand stones, when first seen, appear “like set of children’s blocks” (Auster 1992: 116). The “little red wagon” (Auster 1992: 129) which they are given to haul the stones to the wall, is a “Fast Flyer, the same kind of children’s wagon that Nashe had bought for his daughter on her third birthday. It seemed like a joke [...]” (Auster 1992: 130). It is a long way from the “red two-door Saab 900 - the first unused car he had ever owned” (Auster 1992: 4), which must have felt, for Nashe, like a powerful symbol of adulthood, of manhood. This car he has now lost, along with all his money, in the poker game.

Auster spoke, in *The Invention of Solitude*, of “looking for my father, looking frantically for anyone that resembled him” (Auster 1989: 21). It can be suggested that Nashe was also looking for his father, and Flower and Stone now seem to resemble an idea of his father, a father that he never knew. Auster wrote of how he wanted his father “to take notice of me” (Auster 1989: 21), of “a desire to do something extraordinary, to impress him with an act of heroic proportions” (Auster 1989: 23). This seems to be how Nashe sees the building of the wall: as “an act of heroic proportions,” as a way to make a father substitute “take notice” of him at last. He is certainly disappointed when Flower and Stone do not come out to watch the wall being built. Pozzi and Nashe are overseen throughout the building work, but by Calvin, employed by Flower and Stone, a mere representative. Didi and Gogo wait, Godot never comes; Laurel and Hardy build a wall, “they” never come. Flower and Stone never come to watch the building of the “monument,” the “work of art” (Auster 1992: 86).

Walls can be viewed in many different ways. Flower declares that his wall will be a “barrier against time” (Auster 1992: 86). Like the fence “encompassing the entire extent of Flower and Stone’s domain,” barriers can “keep things out” and keep “things in as well” (Auster 1992: 126). You can be inside the prison, or you can be outside: a wall can be a barrier to freedom, or a protection from a threat. A wall can be “a symphony of resurrected stones” or a “Wailing Wall”

(Auster 1992: 86). In "Laurel and Harvey Go to Heaven" and *The Music of Chance* a wall can also be a means of punishment. A wall can also become a poignant metaphor for the absence of emotional contact. Auster recognized that no matter what he did to impress his father, "his reaction would have been exactly the same. Whether I succeeded or failed did not essentially matter to him" (Auster 1989: 24). There is "Nothing to be done" (Beckett 1978: 9), as Gogo declares so bleakly. Auster feels that he and his father "were fixed in an unmoveable relationship, cut off from each other on opposite sides of a wall" (Auster 1989: 24). A wall can symbolize the absence of love.

Auster writes of the desire to find his father, but also of the need "to recognize, right from the start, that the essence of this project is failure" (Auster 1989: 20). In *Godot*, Godot never comes, and a sense of failure haunts the play, right from the start. Godot, as the absent character, has been interpreted in many ways over the years, and of course should never be tied down to any fixed interpretation. But one way of reading the play is to see these two characters, Didi and Gogo, as lost, as Pozzi and Nashe seem lost, without direction or purpose or aim, apart from waiting for someone who will never come, someone who they seem to hope will change their destiny:

> VLADIMIR: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. *(Pause.)* Unless Godot comes.
> ESTRAGON: And if he comes?
> VLADIMIR: We'll be saved. (Beckett 1978: 94)

Death or Godot, this is the bleak choice. At the ending of *The Music of Chance* there is also a strong sense of failure. The wall is not finished, and although we cannot know for sure, Pozzi seems to have died, and Nashe, too, it seems, also dies when he crashes the Saab. There is an interesting codicil, however. In the film Nashe does not die. Auster, himself, in a Hitchcockian cameo, drives by and picks him up from the side of the road, mirroring the way Nashe picked up Pozzi. So there is some kind of salvation, in the film version at least, with the creator seemingly taking pity on his creation, after all the suffering he has put him through. Nashe has finally found his father.

In "Twentieth-Century French Poetry" in *The Red Notebook* Auster (1996: 46) lists poets who have translated French poetry. Auster has also translated many French poems. The list, which includes Beckett, includes "many of the most important contemporary American British poets [that] have tried their had at translating the French," and he considers that "it would be difficult to imagine their work had they not been touched in some way by the French." This seems to me to be a very good way of considering Auster's relationship

to Beckett's work: it would be difficult to imagine his work had he not been "touched" by Beckett. He speaks about the "tremendous hold" Beckett had over him, and at one time admits that "the influence of Beckett was so strong that I couldn't see my way beyond it" (Auster 1996: 105). In terms of Auster's creative life Beckett has a role as a father figure. But Auster has had many fathers, many influences. "That's why," Auster (1996: 144) explains, that "The Book of Memory" (the second half of *The Invention of Solitude)* "is filled with so many references and quotations, in order to pay homage to all the others inside me." Auster is proud of the "dozens of authors" (Auster 1996: 144) who have gone towards making him the writer that he is. He has found his way beyond Beckett, and, refreshingly, is happy to acknowledge the legacy - of Beckett and of others - in is work. It is another kind of inheritance, which, alongside the inheritance from his father, "all the novels [he has] written have come out of' (Auster 1996: 132).

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Media Simulation and Manipulation in Two Novels of Philip K. Dick from the 1960s

Elisabeth Kraus (Kraus and Auer 2000: 1) suggests that for some time now we have been cautioned to "put our traditional (Enlightenment) notions of *the truth* or *reality* into quotation marks, since our experience of *the real* is always mediated through an empire of signs, as Roland Barthes put it." The ever evolving, ever more sophisticated information technologies have offered new powerful means of manipulating data - and in consequence of *hacking*, warping or even inventing new *reality.*

What becomes increasingly important is the awareness of the manipulation of reality and understanding how and to what extent the mass media have invaded or even colonised our minds, in what way they influence our unconscious, by distorting "not only our fantasies, dreams and desires, but our very concept of *reality"* (Kraus and Auer 2000: 1). After initial optimism about the role of the media in society in the 1960s[1], the persisting attempts of mass media to totally manipulate society are ever-increasingly noticeable. The French sociologist Jean Baudrillard (after Kraus and Auer 2000: 1) claims that the modem visual technologies have created a new culture of images, signs, and codes, which is "impenetrable to old forms of resistance." Baudrillard points to mass media as one of the most important invaders of our reality, and whatever attitude one may have toward Baudrillard's thought, which is often ambiguous and unsystematic, it does provide us with an intriguing critique of contemporary, image saturated age.

Baudrillard developed his most seminal ideas in the 1980s, but, obviously, he was not the first to notice the malevolent force behind mass media. As early as the beginning of 1960s, an American Science-Fiction writer, Philip K. Dick, was already exploring the possible dangers that mass media pose. Different from the predominantly optimistic visions of "mainstream" American Science Fiction writers, Dick stood out as the gloomy prophet of the things to come. In his earliest fiction he struggled to expose the influence mass media exercised

[1] See the works of e.g. Marshall McLuhan or Hans M. Enzensberger.

over American society, and envisaged how they are bound to become the means of reality bending manipulations for the power elite.

The two novels discussed in this essay, *The Simulacra* and *The Penultimate Truth*, come from the 1960s, and do not belong to Dick's most celebrated achievements, however, they do deserve some serious attention as they approach a problem that continues to be relevant even now, about 40 years after they were published.

The Simulacra published in 1964 is a conglomerate of nearly all themes found in early Philip K. Dick's fiction. The novel features a repressive police state, huge powerful business cartels, a charismatic cult leader, fascinating and ruthless female character, time travel, psychic powers, Nazis, androids, emigration to Mars, mind and reality manipulating media, and simulacra. What it lacks is the idea of a conceptual breakthrough from *ordinary* reality into a different one, "a higher or altered state of consciousness" (Mackey 1988: 65), which is so characteristic of Dick.[2] On the other hand, however, it does stress the fact that the manner in which society seems to be structured is a mere fake, and the media manipulate it so that the *bona fide* centres of power are concealed, unknown to ordinary members of society.

The story takes place in Dick's typical near future dystopia-disguised-as-utopia, and the dystopian character of the world is immediately obvious. The USE A (America and Europe merged into one state) is ostensibly ruled by the First Lady, Nicole Thibodeaux, whose husband is regularly replaced in mock elections. The striking matriarchal system is actually a cover for the council, which governs the country from behind the scenes. Nothing is what it seems; people seem to live in a kind of hyperreal, simulated universe. Jean Baudrillard (1991: 3) discussing the novel makes a very apt comment in his SFS essay:

> Dick does not create an alternate cosmos nor a folklore or a cosmic exoticism, nor intergalactic heroic deeds; the reader is, from the outset, in total simulation without origin, past, or future - in a kind of flux of all coordinates (mental, spatio-temporal, semiotic). It is not a question of parallel universes, or double universes, or even of possible universes: not possible nor impossible, nor real nor unreal. It is *hyperreal.* It is a universe of simulation [...].

The world shown in the novel has lost touch with actual reality. Nicole herself died long time ago and since then has been replaced by a succession of actresses merely playing the role of the First Lady, deprived of any power

[2] In fact, all major novels of Philip K. Dick contain this theme.

whatsoever. Her husband, called *derAlte*, as he is always elderly, is a mechanical contraption, a perfect simulacrum produced by a large cartel. The masses are kept unenlightened by television broadcasts starring the First Lady, an ultimate tastemaker, who is adored by most of the people. She is called "the most synthetic object in our milieu [.. .]"(Dick 1977: 98) or "An illusion. Something synthetic, unreal [...]" (Dick 1977: 119) for her role is not much different from the one her android husband plays, being a tool, an instrument of the big-scale fraud. She is a metaphorical android, an idea Dick will come back to on many occasions, a human deprived of humanism, being a mere tool, a product of mass media and the power elite.

It is only a select cast of people (the so-called Ges) that actually know the truth about how things really are, whereas nearly all characters in the novel are mired in the common delusion. Richard Kongrosian, a psychokinetic pianist, is deeply in love with the First Lady, evidently unaware of her fakeness. Al Miller and Ian Duncan, dream of performing in front of her in the White House, which they eventually do, but it only leads to their bitter disappointment as they discover the truth. Douglas Mackey (1988: 65) rightly compares these obsessive feelings towards Nicole with the relationship between Louis Rosen and Pris Frauenzimmer in *We Can Build You* (1972); however, here we deal with the whole society being schizophrenic, as a private delusion becomes public belief, and the central point, around which the society structures its universe is fake, a total simulation, "an image without substance" (Mackey 1988: 65).

The simulation is further perpetuated by the image of Mars as a favourite emigration destination. It is an idealized place people dream about and nearly all characters are sooner or later tempted to stop at one of the *jalopy jungle* outlets (similar to our used car dealerships) to purchase their own one-way minispaceship to get to the red planet. They are helped by papoolas, perfect simulacra of furry telepathic Martian creatures that use subliminal techniques to ensnare people with promises of unlimited freedom in the new world.

The actual situation on Mars is, however, never presented; never are we shown what the emigrants' life is like, just like the characters in the story the readers are fed commercials and promises. Mars seems to be rather a legend, a sort of promised land people have not much idea about. It is a place to dream of escaping to, an ultimate consolation, but still only a dream, which not many are to fulfil. Bearing in mind Dick's other visions of Mars from the same period of his career (e.g. *Martian Time Slip* (1964) or *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965)), which are ratherbleak, grim and sterile, making Mars a place people wish they could emigrate to sounds more like an ironic joke on his part.

An intriguing fact, which might cast some more light on the reality on Mars, is that people deciding to take this step and emigrate take the illusion with them by purchasing android neighbours to keep company.

> A man, when he emigrated, could buy neighbors, buy the simulated presence of life, the sound and motion of human activity - or at least its mechanical near-substitute - to bolster his morale in the new environment of unfamiliar stimuli and perhaps, god forbid, no stimuli at all. And in addition to this primary psychological gain there was a practical secondary advantage as well. The famnexdo group of simulacra developed a parcel of land, tilled it and planted it, irrigated it, made it fertile, highly productive [...]. The famnexdo were actually not next door at all; they were part of their owner's entourage. Communications with them was in essence a circular dialogue with oneself; the famnexdo, if they were functioning properly, picked up the covert hopes and dreams of the settler and detailed them back in an articulated fashion. Therapeutically, this was helpful, although from a cultural standpoint it was a trifle sterile. (Dick 1977; 58-9)

What the escape to Mars really means then is exchanging one illusion for another. There is no escape from the fake reality, the world of *The Simulacra* is a simulated fake, *Ersatz* world without any way out. Whatever the characters turn to is not authentic.

As Hazel Pierce (1983: 126) states, the author "pushes rather than leads the reader, shouts rather than hints at the overt manipulation of our minds and our behaviour [...]". The means for that manipulation is the advertising industry, pursuing the most effective ways to seduce a possible buyer. One of the techniques is the already mentioned papoola, a tool for mind-bending, which deprives the listener of free choice, infusing them with positive feelings, thus winning them to purchase.

A more irritating device for advertising is the Nitz commercial, a synthetic life form programmed to convey a particular message, which stubbornly squeezes into cars and houses attaching itself to a person and repeats the message shrieking repeatedly. The Nitz commercials are practically everywhere, they add to the overall image of chaos and image saturation of the society, in which nothing is what it initially seemed to be. The whole power elite, media, social system, and the law constitute a sophisticated fraud.

People live in communal buildings, divided on the basis of their intelligence, education, wealth and moral standards, with frequent meetings, voting, and fruitless political discussions. This promotes stagnation of human free will and initiative, which is further completely negated by the advertising gimmicks.

Ordinary people have become mere pawns in this political game, expendable and devoid of free will, and the government is just a face-saving device for the ruling elite coupled with business cartels.

The novel ends with an image of violent civil war perpetrated by the anti-government organization called the Sons of Job, as well as by the opposing forces within the ruling council. It is yet another area, in which simulation is visible. As an illegal revolutionary faction The Sons of Job negate the totalitarian system and finally start a coup, however, it turns out to be yet another fabrication, as the charismatic leader of the organization is, in fact, a prominent member of the secret council that rules the country. So, if the coup is to be successful it will only be a cabinet coup; the power will merely change hands and the general situation of the society will not be altered. The exposure of simulation does not necessarily have to lead to the collapse of the system, Nicole broods over her position in the society:

> Perhaps the potency of her presence, the old magical power of her image, would prevail. After all, the public *was accustomed to seeing her.* They believed in her, from decades of conditioning. The tradition-sanctified whip and carrot might still function [...]. They'll believe, [...] if they *want* to believe [...] How many [...] could break with the reality principle? Believe in something they knew intellectually was an illusion? (Dick 1977: 195, emphasis mine)

Dick is raising a disquieting question that the distinction between reality and illusion, which is blurred by the simulacra, might not matter after all, as the media management performs on a subrational level and, in fact, exploits human vulnerability to believe in an image, consequently it is already too late to divert this process.

Dick does not offer much solace, as everything that we touch turns into something totally different. He ends the novel with a bitter, ironic image of *chuppers,* a species of man vaguely similar to Stone Age people, an after-effect of radioactive fall out. The *chuppers* lead their lives in remote villages, separated from the rest of the society, but when the power struggle escalates into an all-out conflict, they gather round TV sets observing the televised war. This is a hint that "*homo sapiens* has had his time at bat" (Pierce 1983: 128) and the new species is now ready to take over, which is evidently a bitter joke on Dick's part. Still, these Neanderthal-like characters provide a contrasting point to the world of numbed emotions, flattened experience, and deadened humanity, which the world of *The Simulacra* is.

Dick further explores his suspicion of the media's capacity for manipulation in a novel from 1964, *The Penultimate Truth.* The novel is an extension of a short story "The Defenders," and its world is divided between two societies: those who live and work underground in huge housing complexes, called tanks, and the "neo-feudal elite" (Seed 1995: 209) living on extensive estates on the surface[3]. Such situation evidently perpetuates an information gap between those who rule and the mass in the tanks. The reason a large part of society stays underground is their conviction that a nuclear war is being fought on the surface, and waged by cybernetic soldiers, called "leadies," which they have to produce in large quantities. This conviction is greatly reinforced by the media. In reality, however, the war has long been over and the western world is governed by an international body in Geneva, and the "leadies" are used by the elite as servants and workers on the huge estates. The war then is a fiction that keeps the subterranean masses in a subservient position. Dick creates two strands of narrative that converge and both work to expose the truth about the war and the regime. On the surface, Joseph Adams works as a government official in the propaganda section and gradually penetrates the mechanism of the system that he hates. Underground, Nicholas St. James is manoeuvring his way up in an attempt to find a replacement pancreas for a member of his tank, in the process of which he will ultimately discover the truth about the actual situation.

The world of the novel is conditioned by and dependent on the flow of information through the media. The main medium used to maintain the status quo is television. Under the surface, the tankers gather every day to watch the news bulletin and they are fed the images of cities being blasted to atoms as the war sweeps the surface of the Earth. They refer to the TV sets as their sole window on the world above, and do not question the images they see as the propaganda machine holds them tightly in its claws. A popular question-and-answer program, for example, is in fact, an effective way for strengthening collective obedience by prompting the participants to answer in the right way.

[3] The situation when a society is divided into two categories, and the ones living and working inside a fabricated world are kept in the dark about the surrounding world has often been used in S-F literature and film. A good example is the Polish S-F comedy *Seksmisja* where the underground world is inhabited by a female totalitarian society, which is misinformed about the living conditions on the surface. The leader of the no-male community is in fact a fake, a relict male dressed up as a woman, who enjoys an indulgent life in a comfortable modem villa on the surface; or a Hollywood super-production *The Island,* where a society of clones is raised in order to provide "spare" organs for the rich. This idea, in turn, is similar to Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go,* where people are raised and brought up in closed youth centres, only to be used as organ donors when they are older.

On the other hand, there is a tanker, who records the Protector's addresses and when viewing them again spots minor inconsistencies. These discrepancies reveal the war as a gigantic lie, but what is also implied here is that the role of the media in perpetuating the deception can eventually be disclosed.

Simulation is the fundamental defining process in the novel. The regime makes use of a guild of fabricators, who are devoted to inventing and creating a "universe of authentic fakes" (Dick 1978:37). This is a prime example of what George Slusser called destabilising of history in Dick's fiction. Commenting on *The Man in the High Castle*, which is very much devoted to the production of fake fakes, he argues that:

> The word *history* places the burden of the event not only on the thing but on the mind that seeks to place it. [...] to consider a thing as history is to accept its replication [...]. History [...] in Dick is made to function so as to undo its own fixity. By fixing a thing, we allow it to replicate. And in the proliferation of like events we lose sight of the *authentic* one, do not know its place or ours.
>
> (Slusser 1992: 207)

Adams is a perfect illustration of that notion, as, for example, he is confused whether to value a bust he has found in the post war rubble or treat it as yet another fake. The omnipresence of simulation brings on confusion over what is authentic and the boundary between authenticity and sham has become blurred or even indistinguishable.

The narrative is punctuated by revelations that yet suspend the truth to some concluding point, which eventually never comes, hence the title *The Penultimate Truth.* Adams realises that the President of the US is a simulacrum, but not only that, he/it has an identical counterpart in Russia, Adams discovers that the Eisenbludt[4] studios in Moscow have made two dissimilar documentaries on the history of Europe, and, simultaneously, he becomes involved in a governmental plan to produce ancient artefacts. All three cases involve a principle of recession, as David Seed (1995: 210) suggests. Adams's initial realisation that the President is lying is supplanted by a shock of the knowledge that the lie goes further up, and the agents of manipulation are technicians maintaining the simulacrum president. The two films present contrasting versions of history after the war, and each of them contains discrepancies that emphasise their status as fiction. Finally, the governmental intrigue in Geneva, between the director (who himself is hardly a human being, as his organs have been replaced by prosthetic

[4] David Seed suggests this is an allusion to Eisenstein and the UFA propaganda studios in the Third Reich (1995: 211).

ones, and only his brain remains original) and his opposition shows that once you possess power over the media you are able to fake anything, even ancient history. A contrasting process of, actually growing in status, concerns David Lantano, a Cherokee Indian, who exists between reality and illusion. He is an actor who played the role of a charismatic leader in the bogus propaganda news stories and in this way comes to embody the typical qualities of leadership, while being no more than yet another fakery.

Lantano is similar to Benny Cemoli, a character from a 1960 short story "If There Were No Benny Cemoli." The story provides a further interesting study in the power of mass media. After an apocalyptic war people on Earth are struggling to rebuild the civilisation when a host of spaceships arrives. The spaceships carry people from Alpha Centauri, who arrive to help the locals rebuild the civilisation, but also punish the culprits in the atomic war. The Centaurians establish efficient administration and police forces, but the Earthmen, having expected the aliens' arrival, have prepared a trick to play on the invaders. They sabotage the headquarters of *New York Times*, which is a fully automated, homeostatic newspaper, which gathers data on its own and publishes itself regularly. The newspaper starts reports on a fully fictitious man called Benny Cemoli, who, as it is claimed there, seems to be the person responsible for the apocalyptic nuclear war. The police apparatus of the Centaurians instantly focuses on Cemoli, launching a detailed investigation into the man, and consequently letting the real culprits get away.

Dick stresses the importance of mass media in creating public figures, events or trends, in his opinion reality is always mediated. As one of the Centaurian bureaucrats thinks: "We are only real so long as *The Times* writes about us; as if we were dependent for our existence on it" (Dick 1991: 183). The power of the media to establish and demolish is far too great, and as Dick himself believed "at least half the famous people in history never existed [...]" (Dick 1991: 376) but were a product of mass media.

Both novels on one hand deal with the role of mass media in assisting power elite in getting into office and then maintaining this office, and on the other they show the political consequences of the disinformation techniques, disinformation in the meaning of spreading to a specific target group false, incomplete, or misleading information. A practice common in both the USA and Soviet Union in the 1960s and later (Shultz and Godson 1984: 37). The power elite of *The Penultimate Truth* as well as *The Simulacra* is nothing short of the totalitarian regime in Orwell's *1984*, as it systematically sustains its power by a torrent of falsifications covered up by an image of a father-like

leader with everyone's good as his sole goal. In *The Penultimate Truth* the impression created by the media is that the Protector addresses each person individually, which exposes how the image is capable of securing submission of each individual, even though the image is counterfeit. The same situation takes place in *The Simulacra*, with the First Lady and *DerAlte*. Both novels thus are tales of almost unlimited manipulability of facts and images, of dictatorship of bureaucracy that holds on to power thanks to their ability to manipulate and control the *truth* with the use of different media.

What is easily discernible here is one of the central motifs that run through Dick's fiction: reality is never given and unmediated; it is always managed by dominant ideological elites in order to gain or maintain their political role. Dick himself suggested that this was his: "[...] underlying premise [...] that the world we experience is not the real world [...] the phenomenal world is not the real world, it's something other than the real world. It's either semi-real, or some kind of forgery" (Rickman 1998: 128). His fiction, especially early fiction, contains numerous examples of characters who suddenly find that reality is not what they used to think it was, that it is "something other" to repeat Dick's words. The main idea, however, is that the real can in no time transform itself, or that it turns out to be only a mere façade perpetrated by some malevolent forces.

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PART V

Comparative Literature

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The Motif of Darkness in John Dowland's "In Darkness Let Me Dwell" and George Harrison's "Beware of Darkness"

The aim of this paper is to present and compare the use of the motif of darkness in two English lyric songs that have come to be recognized by scholars and critics to be among the finest examples of both the craft of musical composition and the art of constructing a refined lyrical utterance to contribute to the overall sophisticated quality of the respective pieces. Despite being composed in relative distance from each other they nevertheless share a lot of both musical and poetic tradition although their treatment of the central imagerial motif is, as shall be seen, quite contrastive.

The first of the songs in question is John Dowland's composition "In Darkness Let Me Dwell." It was published[1] by the composer's son Robert in the year 1610 as part of the collection called *A Musicali Banquet,* which included a selection of lyric songs in English as well as in several other European languages and the choice argues careful consideration and fine taste on the part of the editor. "In Darkness Let Me Dwell" is one of the three which are by John Dowland. Despite this relative lack of prominence, for the song was never included in the four basic collections of Dowland's songs which were published between 1597 and 1612, the composition has since come to be recognized as counting among the most distinctive examples of the art of the English Renaissance songcraft (Sola Pinto 1966: 67, 125-27).

Its enduring appeal seems to be to a large extent the result of the fact that the song manages to encapsulate a lot of the period's aesthetic ramifications in the form of a clear-cut, straightforward imagery. This imagery derives directly from the contemporary cult of Melancholy, which was one of the most prominent elements in the literary atmosphere of the early seventeenth century in Jacobean England. The interest in melancholy as both a psychological condition in the medical sense and a phenomenon affecting man's spiritual and artistic life is in

[1] All the following data is based on the liner notes to the collected works of John Dowland by Rooley 1997: 29 (see References).

itself a complex affair for it influenced, sometimes in a forceful, sometimes in a subtle way, virtually every aspect of the country's cultural life. It thus extends from contemporary medical writings, through the music of Dowland and Byrd, the poetry of Donne and other metaphysical poets, the conservative "Golden Age" poetry of Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton and George Chapman,[2] to the character of Hamlet. The culmination of the fascination with Melancholia was of course the well-known *Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton published in 1621, which in its way seeks to connect all the divergent strains of thought which had accumulated over the concept. Thus Burton develops the commonly shared idea which treats melancholy as an essentially mental condition originating from the excess of cold and dry quality in the balance of the four humours and resulting not only in languishing depression, but also in states of aimless agitation, restlessness and delusions. Quoting both European and Arab psychiatrists, Burton stresses the unique role of art and especially music and dancing in curing the condition.[3]

The understanding of this leads to a full appreciation of the nature of the link between melancholy and art. In this view, while the condition itself is not evidently positive, it potentially produces the right mental condition for the catharsis which art is in the natural position to offer. Thus music and poetry, which seem to obsessively concentrate on describing and defining the unwholesome mental state, offer by this very characteristic, an opportunity to undergo a process which in its essence is a therapeutic one.

All this leads one to the theme of darkness which had come to be a central motif to convey the notion of Melancholia in poetic imagery among the artists and intellectuals connected to the person of Lucy Russell, the Countess of Bedford, who emerged at that time as the pivotal figure in the patronage of artists within the Pembroke/Essex baronial circle, supporting the likes of Daniel, Drayton, Dowland, and Donne. Of these it is perhaps John Donne's literary output which was most intimately affected by the patronage and the friendship and this is evident in his verse epistles written to the Countess. Similarly, two most accomplished poems dealing with the melancholic state - "Twickenham Garden" and "A Noctural upon Saint Lucy's Day" - were also composed by him. It is especially the latter which lays the blueprint for the use of the imagery of darkness for a poetic analysis of the melancholic mood. There the description of the melancholy endured on the year's shortest day and caused by the death of

[2] The term is used in the sense it has in Lewis 1968: 464-535.

[3] For more on the topic, see Radden 2002: 129-6.

the beloved is conveyed through a series of images developing from the notion of darkness in the sense of privation, absence or "nothingness." Although the contemplation of darkness here ends in despair, nonetheless it offers the purification necessary to experience the pain in the proper, conscious way which paradoxically will ultimately result in the obliteration of the pain itself:

> He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
> Of absence, darkness, death - things which are not.

What John Dowland does in his song is aiming at the same set of connotations via conventional allegory:

> In darkness let me dwell,
> The ground shall Sorrow be;
> The roof Despair to bar
> All cheerful light from me,
> The walls of marble black
> That moisten'd still shall weep;
> My music hellish jarring sounds
> To banish friendly sleep.

Dowland's song is not only simplified in metre (as one switches from the complex rhyme pattern of an iambic pentametre stanza in Donne to an *abcb* arrangement of iambic trimetre lines in Dowland), but in the whole poetic apparatus as well. Nevertheless its allegorical framework is effective enough to successfully convey the underlying poetic meaning. Thus in Dowland's song darkness is the inside of a windowless house, where the conditions are defined by negative inference: there is no light there, no rest, no peace, and even time and space become obliterated. This is because with no light and the walls being made "of marble black" one cannot define physical dimensions.

Furthermore the "jarring sounds" will not only induce extreme physical fatigue, which makes time orientation difficult, but will also prevent the speaker from conceiving of anything in terms of spatial orientation since the persistent existence of discord will make it impossible for proper music to enter the interior. Proper music, in contemporary understanding of the term, means sound which is arranged in time according to the notion of harmony, which, as all medieval and Renaissance psychology explained, is conceived of through an essentially spatial mental layout. Thus all possible mental sequencing of time is banished from the house of Melancholy with even the walls weeping incessantly so as to avoid being subject to any measurement.

An interesting thing is that even the very structure of the house is designed to disorientate the inmate. This is because it seems that the natural allegorical design of the "ground" and the "roof' is in fact inverted here and while the natural allegorical logic would possibly have made the roof out of sorrow and the ground - indicating the bottom-line - out of despair Dowland inverts the scheme and the purpose appears to be to even further alienate and disorientate the inhabitant of the house by altering even the most basic of all spatial landmarks - the up-and-down orientation points.

Within such a framework darkness stands for the ultimate form of privation which is not only sensory and ultimately mental, but which is, as Donne more articulately puts it, "an elixir" of nothing, i.e. an emptiness arrived at through a condensation of ordinary emptiness, and hence one which is a more intense form of it. As such it combines the claustrophobic sense of the voluntary confinement with the sense of being lost in time and space.

The voluntary nature of this confinement is, however, important here as the lyrical persona enters the house of Melancholy willingly and with no illusions as to its character:

> Thus wedded to my woes
> And bedded to my tomb,
> O let me living die,
> Till death do come.

Thus the persona will "dwell" in the house - not properly speaking live, not wait and, significantly, not even exist. Just like in Donne's lyric, being situated inside darkness means being situated inside nothing and it similarly aims at conveying the idea of a cathartic escape from the experienced pain paradoxically achieved by attuning all of one's senses to the experience. The resulting state in which one will "living die" is in its essence a scheme which aims at transferring the experience out onto the surrounding. In this way dwelling in darkness is a way of preventing darkness from dwelling in you. This is because, although the reality of darkness is here all-encompassing and seemingly inescapable, it becomes dependent on the person of the observer as it is his conscious choice to be submerged in the trans-like state of contemplating the distillation of one's own misfortune.

Thus by projecting the tormenting experience onto the surrounding reality the persona himself becomes in a sense liberated from it as the contemplation of pain brings the fragmented perception back into focus and balance.

Let us now turn to the second of the two lyrics with which our present argument is concerned. The song in question is George Harrison's composition "Beware of Darkness," which dates from 1970 when it constituted one of the many musical gems gracing the musician's debut album *All Things Must Pass* - originally a triple-vinyl collection which has since achieved the status of one of the very greatest artistic exercises in its musical genre.[4] The two compositions offer possibilities of an interesting and revealing comparison by virtue of being closely approximate in formal characteristics and means of expression and most importantly, of course, by virtue of making the concept of darkness the cornerstone of their poetic imagery.

The comparison is also interesting because the way in which George Harrison's lyric develops this motif is quite divergent from the Renaissance composer. There are indeed two fundamental points of difference which account for the latter of the two lyrics using the concept of darkness in a distinctly different way. The first is that, with the cult of Melancholy being long confined to cultural history, "Beware of Darkness" substitutes for it a deeply spiritual, religious perspective which, although introduced into the lyric by subtle understatement, nevertheless permeates its entire imagery and message. The second point, which corresponds closely to the first, but this time relates directly to the form of the song, is that instead of an intimate lyric confession, as was the case in Dowland, Harrison's song takes the form of an endearingly intimate address.

Watch out now,
Take care, beware of falling swingers
Dropping all around you,
The pain that often lingers in your fingertips
Beware of darkness

Although it is difficult to imagine leaving aside the autobiographical data concerning the composition of the song,[5] no circumstantial context is able to account for the subtle turn of phrase which gives special forcefulness to the song's unassuming utterances. The tone of the opening lines effortlessly develops the close relation between the speaker and the addressee and it automatically positions the lyric in the tradition of poems where the emotional closeness is a springboard for unpremeditated moral advice. In this context one cannot but

[4] For the additional critical background, see Greene 2006: 139-84; Allison 2006: 110-15; Giuliano 1997: 85-158; for the biographical context, seeClayson 1997:220; Shapiro 2003:113-50.

[5] The song was apparently conceived during the musician's hospital visits to his mother dying of cancer.

think of lyrics such as Chaucer's "Truthe," Kipling's "If," Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night," and Bob Dylan's "Forever Young." As one may expect, it is the poem by Dylan Thomas that corresponds most closely to Harrison's lyric, although darkness is here not the blind massive force of unpremeditated annihilation depriving the dying of life and of pain in a way of natural kindness, just like it is not a soothing ingredient of a potentially therapeutic psychological exercise.

Indeed, in stark contrast to Dowland, it is precisely dwelling in darkness which is to be avoided at all cost and, in stark contrast to Dylan Thomas, the idea of the inevitability of surrender is also to be strenuously resisted. This is because in Harrison's song darkness is also a force of negation, but this time it is an active, powerful and vicious force pursuing the destruction of something which the song, in a masterful feat of well-pointed understatement, does not overtly name, but the loss of which seems to constitute the ultimate loss. One can immediately spot the heavily sinister undertone which accompanies the word "darkness" every time the speaker utters it. Thus, when, by contrast, in Dowland's lyric the word is a descriptive term for the gloominess of mood accompanying Melancholy, in Harrison the word indicates a kind of intelligent black hole sucking in goodness in order to maintain and define its own existence. It is therefore a force much stronger than Dowland's Melancholy, most importantly in the sense that it cannot be cheated to yield a therapeutic result not only because it seems to be in some way intelligent but because it is so thoroughly evil that no effort can produce any good result while partaking of its power.

One may therefore ask for the reason why the word "darkness" closes each section of the speaker's utterance since it is at the same time bestowed the insidiously sinister air. The reason seems to be that what darkness stands for in the lyric represents a force which irreparably destroys the very core of one's being and is therefore harmful in an ultimate way, but which is for most of the time disguised as something else when it is actually encountered in everyday life. Hence the naming of "darkness," in the hushed, almost reverent way in which the celebratory tone is contrived to allay the naked primitive terror which the word conjures up, is designed to serve as a way to emphasize the need to at all cost defend oneself, or someone dear and precious, against what the word represents and in order to do this one has to identify "darkness" behind the veil of everyday reality. The risk inherent in the repeated mention of the dreaded word is apparently worth taking because to fall for "darkness" would be worse than the worst fear of what the word itself portends.

Thus “darkness” seems to lurk here inside various things - it is equally present in the false promise inherent in the life of the “swingers,” or social climbers of a robustly egotistic persuasion, and in the lives they change by the way they live theirs, as well as in the lives of those for whom the emotional burden of a deeply experienced personal loss makes it impossible to regain mental equilibrium (and it is here worth noting how superbly effective the line about the “pain which lingers in your fingertips” is in imaginatively evoking the depth of the feeling). One may easily notice that, despite the two walks of life being mutually exclusive in a very firm way, the danger of “darkness” is part of both experiences.

The second stanza of the song develops the idea further by adding another possibility, this time it is the entanglement in the endless maze of one’s own private mind, stemming, as it often may, from the observation of all the negative aspects of the outside world:

Watch out now,
Take care, beware the thoughts that linger
Winding up inside your head
The hopelessness around you
In the dead of night
Beware of sadness

The next section of the lyric brings in more of the spiritual dimension, which also positions the song in contrast with “In Darkness Let Me Dwell.” While in Dowland’s song the mental pain was considered the ultimate threat, in Harrison’s song what is thought of as a greater danger is the fact that the pain involved in the contact with “darkness” diverts one from the destined course of one’s life. Thus the purpose of life is not, as in Dowland, personal gratification, but it appears to function as part of a greater design which transcends the individual mind - in other words one does not live in order to be happy but to fulfil a mission for which one is placed in life by a force beyond one’s own volition:

It can hit you, it can hurt you -
Make you sore and what is more
That is not what you are here for.

The last section of the song begins with a juxtaposition of a crowd of dancers made up of those whose have chosen not to answer to the destiny bestowed on them, and the solitary “unconscious sufferer” who, while he may or may not be part of the dancing crowd (notice the understatement again),

is not able to discover his mission in life because, in some similarity to the speaker in Dowland, he cannot isolate and focus on the precise nature of his pain. However, it is also here that Dowland and Harrison part company. This is because, while in Dowland's song the liberation is achieved through a manipulation of reality, Harrison invokes Maya - the deity which in the Indian religions is responsible for creating all manner of illusions and false appearances, and which, specifically in Hinduism, needs to be overcome in order to achieve the true vision of the divine essence:[6]

> Watch now, take care
> Beware of soft shoe shufflers
> Dancing down the sidewalks,
> As each unconscious sufferer
> Wanders aimlessly,
> Beware of MAYA
> Watch now take care,
> Beware of greedy leaders
> They'll take you where you should not go,
> While Weeping Atlas Cedars
> They just want to grow -
> Beware of darkness.

Now it is important to realize that, although the stylistic use of the concept is similar, Maya is not strictly speaking the "darkness" which has been defined as the ultimate threat of spiritual existence. It is more that the danger of not seeing through the appearances of life is that Maya may prevent one from identifying some strands of human experience as leading not just to pain and sadness, but, more crucially, into "darkness." Hence all the illusions of life are, as it were, the tool of "darkness" used to waylay the unwary into a trap.

Indeed the idea of the dangers of life stealthily sucking in one not on his proper guard is restated once again in the last lines of the song and it is also here that the religious perspective reasserts itself again in the careful phrasing chosen for the closing verses. The danger represented by the "greedy leaders" consists in drawing one into compromising what may be called the pure form of life and substituting it for ideologies imitating the true values of life by offering life-defining philosophies which are, however, based on the greed and ambition of some and the denial of the fullness of existence for many.

[6] See Eliade 1994b: 129-37; Eliade 1994a: 33-51.

Here the notion of the inherent nature of life as a mission returns in the line warning that shallow ideologies is where “you should not go” not because of an arbitrary prohibition (and therefore not “where you mustn’t go”) but because to live one’s life to the full is to live it according to the way it was objectively designed to be lived. Therefore, just like the Atlas Cedars fulfill their vocation by living to the full their natural mission to grow (which, importantly, is not the same as having the opportunity to grow to the full) the human life is also thought of here a mission to achieve the fullness of life (and the careful use of understatement is also worth noting here), while “darkness” is a force which seeks to make one accept pain, frustration and the sense of loss as the ultimate reality.

Hence the reason why in George Harrison’s song the illusion inherent in darkness cannot be put to a good use is that the imagery of the song builds on reference to an objective reality which is independent of the mental reality of the speaker, and the illusion of the reality of pain is also in its roots conditioned from the outside even if it works solely within the realm of individual psychology.

As may be now observed, the understanding of the concept of darkness and its role in the imagery of the two respective pieces is markedly different, but in either case it is developed with a commendable poetic precision where the craft of the word goes side by side with the musical accomplishment and thus it is to be hoped that the comparative study of the two songs has revealed the potential of this form of artistic expression for putting forward lyric arguments of considerable sophistication and intellectual depth.

Thus the juxtaposition of the two lyrics undertaken here has been designed to display some of the semantic possibilities exploited by those searching for a more profound meaning behind concepts and ideas current in their time. This search frequently yields rich and multifarious, though incompatible, results whereby the interplay of contradictory meanings may invest notions like that of darkness with the subtle form of ambiguity inherent in concepts the contemplation of which has, over the ages, proved both puzzling and invigorating to generations of artists.

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Hyperbole and Understatement in the Depiction of the Emotions

> *Oft with true sighs, oft with uncalled tears,*
> *Now with slow words, now with dumb eloquence [...]*
> (Philip Sydney: *Astrophel and Stella* [1591] etext)

The language of the emotions seems to be infinitely varied. Their expression can run the whole gamut from elaborate eloquence to reservedness and understatement, from verbosity to suggestive body language. In every culture, however, the expression of the emotions is also subject to particular display rules which regulate what and how much a speaker may appropriately express under what circumstances. In my paper, I want to analyse the display rules in operation in English literature with regard to the description of pain and desire which, at first sight, are not only situated at opposed poles of human experience, but also seem to be regulated by entirely different rules of decorum. The article will illustrate that despite the remarkable consistency of pain and love metaphors used in a wide range of poetry and prose, acceptability of emotional rhetoric and the use of stylistic excess or understatement in a text is still strongly dependent on genre, gender, culture and context. Examples will be drawn from a wide range of texts in poetry and prose; for reasons of scope, drama will not be considered.

Psychologists, physicians and literary scholars have all emphasised the difficulty of expressing physical pain in words. Extreme pain, "actively destroys" (Scarry 1985: 4) language, completely resists narrative embodiment (Wandless 1991: 52) and reduces the sufferer to cries and groans (which, indeed, are the natural language of pain, just as they are, in fact, the language of sexual pleasure). Even in such cases, however, the body is not mute but inarticulate, speaking in pains and symptoms (Frank 1995: 2). Yet even under less traumatic circumstances the number of lexicalised pain words in the English language is fairly limited. Many pain words in English (as the carefully researched Me Gill pain questionaire shows) are metaphorical and refer to temporal, thermal and pressure dimensions of pain, to its intensity and fluctuation, and to the sensory, affective and evaluative content of the experience (Melzack and Katz

1992: 153). Thus pain may, for instance, be described as pricking, boring, drilling, stabbing or lancinating (on a rising scale regarding the intensity of the sensation), or be graded as hot, burning, scalding and searing. Depending on its intensity, pain can feel dull, sore, hurting, aching or heavy; depending on duration it can be transient, intermittent, rhythmic or constant. From an evaluative angle it can, for instance, be described as annoying, troublesome, miserable, intense or unbearable. Many of these expressions take the form of metaphors trying to find equivalents to the elusive nature of pain, so difficult to communicate to interlocutors, in common experiences within our culture, such as pricking or burning: "When fevers bum, or agues freezes" (Bums, "To the Toothache," see below) or "a sharp piercing pain like a red-hot needle" (Lodge 1995: 3, 4). However, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Rubik 2008: 258), comparisons with stabbing, for instance, invoke what speakers imagine violent penetration would feel like, rather than reflecting real-life experience. We thus learn rhetorical idioms to verbalise bodily dysfunction (Kleinman 1988: 13), but genuine communication about the subjective experience of the affliction itself remains precariously imprecise.

Intuitively, we would think that the range of words available to us for the expression of love is infinitely more varied. Virginia Woolf herself stated that "[t]he merest schoolgirl when she falls in love has Shakespeare, Donne, Keats to speak her mind for her," whereas there are no literary precedents for the expression of pain (Woolf 1994: 318f). Cognitive linguists like Kovecses (2000), however, have pointed out that when we speak of love in the English language, we usually also draw upon a fairly limited range of some 10 conceptual metaphors. Love - or lust - is conceptualised as FIRE; HUNGER; ANIMAL; WAR; DISEASE AND INSANITY; NATURAL FORCE; RAPTURE; OPPONENT, and PRESSURE IN A CONTAINER.

Here are some typical examples: In Manley's *New Atalantis* (1991: 19,41, 33), the amorous Duchess is overcome with "transport" at her (false) lover's vows; Chariot is a "lovesick maid," and the Duke is "regularly possessed. [...] That fatal night the Duke felt hostile fires in his breast. Love was entered with all his dreadful artillery: he took possession in a moment of the avenues that lead to the heart." Manley's description thus blends images from the conceptual metaphors of RAPTURE, INSANITY; FIRE and WAR/OPPONENT. Jane Eyre is quite overcome by an unexpected encounter with Rochester: "[...] every nerve I have is unstmng: for a moment I am beyond my own mastery," and a confession of love is wrung from her: "I said this almost involuntarily, and, with as little sanction of free will, my tears gushed out," since "I could

repress what I endured no longer" (Bronte 1966: 272, 279, 280). Here, the imagery seems to be taken from PRESSURE IN A CONTAINER and NATURAL FORCE. Later, after the interrupted wedding, her resistance drives Rochester half mad: "Jane, you must be reasonable, or in truth I shall again become frantic," and "[h]e seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically, I felt, at the moment, powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow of a furnace" (Bronte 1966: 331, 344). In this passage the metaphors of FIRE , MADNESS, HUNGER, ANIMAL and NATURAL FORCE are linked. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the male character employs the image of HUNGER/THIRST when he feels that Bertha "had left me thirsty and all my life would be thirst and longing for what I had lost before I found it" (Rhys 1968: 141). Lovelace, in *Clarissa*, is riven by the ANIMAL force of his passion: "[...] the rage of love, the rage of revenge is upon me! By turns they tear me!" (Richardson 1962: 194)

Complete reconceptualisations of love in terms of different metaphors are rare, though poetic elaboration is more frequent, in which ideas taken from the 10 basic conceptual metaphors are developed further: thus Lawrence (1987: 313f.) speaks of a

> dark flood of electric passion she released from him [...] She had established a rich new circuit, a new current of passional electric energy, between the two of them, released from the darkest poles of the body and established in perfect circuit. It was a dark fire of electricity that rushed from him to her, and flooded them both with rich peace, satisfaction.

Lawrence thereby modifies and expands the original concepts of LOVE IS FIRE and LOVE IS A NATURAL FORCE. In *New Atalantis* Manley, elaborating the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS DISEASE, compares guilty passion to an "irremediable poison" (1991: 32) infecting the body and weakening the moral stamina. Restoration comedy is particularly inventive in its (often misogynist) imagery, yet even comparisons of would-be lovers to "Huntsmen," who "lose more time [...] in starting the game, than in running it down" (Wycherley 2000: 175) in fact draw upon an ANIMAL concept, and the analogy of sexual abstinence and fasting obviously utilises the HUNGER metaphor: "Faith, long fasting, child, spoils a man's appetite." [...] "And would you fall to, before a priest says grace?" (Behn 1992: 192f.). Even such far-fetched images as likening love relations to a card game: "a man can never quietly give over when he's weary" (Etherege 2000: 308), or business relations: "of all old Debts Love [...] is paid the most unwillingly," (Wycherley 2000: 175) can ultimately be traced back to the concept of an OPPONENT to be cheated. That does not mean

that complete innovation is entirely impossible. “Mistresses are like Books; if you pore upon them too much, they doze you [...]” (Wycherley 2000: 176) is certainly an unusual simile, though, after all, it likens the ennui of sated passion with a NATURAL FORCE of drowsiness impossible to resist.

In both the descriptions of love and pain, however, the difficulty not only consists in finding the adequate word to convey an individual experience, but also of striking a balance between tact and immediacy. Descriptions of the emotions are thus not merely a matter of the lexicon, but also of taboo and decorum. There are rules of display which differ from culture to culture and are also contingent on class, gender and age as well as on genre. Especially experts working with pain patients have recently become increasingly aware of the problems such cultural codes present for the diagnosis and treatment of illnesses especially in multi-cultural societies. Although the acuity of the senses responsible for registering pain sensations is the same in all normal people (Wall 1999: 63), tolerance levels and rules of display vary culturally and according to context (even depending, in experiments, as Wall (1999: 67) has pointed out, on “whether the person applying the stimulus is male or female, a professor, a technician or a fellow student.”). Conversely, sympathetic response by the environment to the patients’ suffering also significantly hinges on social and gendered expectations:

> In a large hospital, female nurses shared the responsibilites for postoperative patients in both male and female wards. It was found that the consumption of analgesics was much higher in the male wards than in the female wards. The nurses were carefully observed and interviewed. Their consistant attitude was that if a male patient complained of pain it must be serious because everyone knew that male patients were a tough lot and should be taken seriously. On the other hand, they had a different attitude to their fellow females, who were generally considered by these nurses to make a great fuss about minor problems and therefore were to be brushed off with a minimal response. (Wall 1999: 69)

Such surveys show that hospital staff tend not to take seriously patients’ complaints if in their own estimation (based on stereotype) the pain display is “inappropriate” to a given situation. In multi-cultural societies, patients may well be admonished to “control themselves” if they fail to conform to what is considered generally acceptable display in the host culture, though entirely different rules may apply in the patient’s own cultural background. Indeed, even the very notion of what is an illness differs between cultures, as it did from one historical period to another (Kleinman 1988: 11). Interpreters may well

be needed in hospitals as cultural mediators to explain culturally contingent forms of pain behaviour.

Since display rules of what may legitimately be expressed by whom, to what extent and under what circumstances are internalised from a very early age on, writers can generally predict quite accurately the expectations of readers from the same cultural background and hence "what it standardly takes" (Carroll 1997:205,206) to elicit sympathy or antipathy for a particular fictional character who is in love or pain. Many critics have argued that focalization is the decisive point in evoking reader empathy. But in fact the situation is much more complicated. Focalization no more automatically evokes sympathy than any other stylistic device. Reader emotions are manipulated by a complicated and delicate interplay of various stylistic features in which choice of words, but also the length of the description and detail dwelt upon play a decisive role as well. Robert Bums' humorous poem "Address to the Toothache. Written when the Author was grievously tormented by that disorder" is an excellent example.

My curse upon your venom'd stang,
That shoots my tortur'd gums alang,
An' thro' my lug gies mony a twang,
Wi' gnawing vengeance,
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,
Like racking engines!
[■■•I
Adown my beard the slavers trickle
I throw the wee stools o'er the mickle,
While round the fire the giglets keckle,
To see me loup,
While, raving mad, I wish a heckle
Were in their doup!
[...]
Where'er that place be priests ca' hell,
Where a' the tones o' misery yell,
[•••]
Thou, Toothache, surely bear'st the bell,
Amang them a'!
[...] (Bums [1786]: etext)

The vivid description of the toothache is doubtless convincing. Bums employs an impressive number of lexicalized pain words to describe the qualia of his affliction. Evaluative adjectives give an insight into the subjective experience

of the pain, which is also inscribed on his body. Body language and somatic symptoms act as metonymic indicators of pain both in real life and in literature. Yet spending so much time on complaining and detailing the agony caused by what is, after all, a minor illness, creates the impression of snivelling. It is exactly here that rules of pain behaviour mentally klick into operation: the sufferer's frantic demeanour will, in an English context, be considered as inappropriate behaviour for a man, as will the linguistic hyperbole - he likens toothache to the worst torture in hell. In addition, the broad Scottish dialect and the ingenuity of finding so many rhyming pain words for the aaabab rhyme scheme, add to the humorous tone. All in all, the speaker is thereby turned into an object of ridicule rather than empathy.

Surprisingly, hyperbole seems acceptable in Winscom's "The Head-Ach," possibly because the speaker is a woman, for whom different display rules apply. She, too, somewhat exaggeratedly speaks of her headache as "agonizing," "torture," "worse than death"; but she suppresses her pain display for the sake of decorum: hers is a "silent anguish," an "unutterable sigh." The poem adopts a confessional tone and casts the reader as confidante and possible counsellor (rather than as an amused spectator, as in Bums' poem).

> [...] In each successive month full twelve long days
> And tedious nights my sun withdraws his rays!
> Leaves me in silent anguish on my bed,
> Afflicting all the members in the head;
> Throug [sic!] ev'ry particle the torture flies,
> But centers in the temples, brain and eyes;
> The efforts of the hands and feet are vain,
> While bows the head with agonizing pain;
> While heaves the breast th'unutterable sigh,
> And the big tear drops from the languid eye.
> For ah! my children want a mother's care,
> A husband, too, should due assistance share,
> Myself for action form'd would fain thro' life
> Be found th'assidous - valuable wife;
> But now, behold, I live unfit for ought;
> [...]
> Ye sage Physicians, where's your wonted skill?
> In vain the blisters, bolusses and pill;
> [...]
> In vain the British and Cephalic Snuff,
> All Patent Medicines are empty stuff;

> The launcet [sic!], leech, and cupping swell the train
> Of useless efforts, which but gave me pain;
> [...]. (Winscom 1774: 152-155)

Physicians (Wall (1999), Frank (1995), Kleinman (1988)) have recently stressed the influence the patient's attitude to the illness has on the perception of pain. Interpretations may range from suffering as the wages of sin to meaningless existential torture, and subjective experience of pain will vary accordingly. In Winscom's case, the lyrical speaker's suffering is obviously aggravated by her feeling of guilt towards her husband and children for neglecting her duties, and by the discrepancy between her sickly state and her own active self image (she is unable to render "due assistance" and "care," indeed "unfit for ought"). The location of her pain in "the temples, brain and eyes," its regular recurrence and the sensitivity to light (in a line not quoted above the illness threatens to "dissolve my sight") allow us to surmise that Winscom probably suffered from severe migraine. The list of useless remedies she tried -though some may seem odd to a modem reader - does not give the impression of excessive self-pity but rather serves as proof of the severity of the illness and her desperate search for relief, thereby inviting a sympathetic reaction on the part of the reader.

Whether or not readers are willing to accept a lengthy dwelling on pain, of course, also very much depends on the seriousness of the case. The description of her own mastectomy, which Fanny Bumey gives in a letter to Esther Burney, though long and horribly detailed, never seems exaggerated or self-pitying. Quite on the contrary; considering that the operation was performed without anaesthetic, one wonders how a patient could remember so clearly and describe with such precision. There is no need to dwell extensively on the qualia of the sensations; the physical symptoms - her screaming, fainting, blanched face, metonymically indicate the excrutiating pain, and the mere description of the incision and scraping will send a sympathetic shudder down the spine of every reader.

> Yet when the dreadful steel plunged into the breast - cutting through veins - arteries - flesh - nerves [...] I began a scream that lasted unintermittingly during the whole time of the incision -1 marvel that it rings not in my Ears still! so excrutiating was the agony. When the wound was made, & the instrument was withdrawn, the pain seemed undiminished, for the air that suddenly rushed into those delicate parts felt like a mass of minute but sharp & forked poniards that were tearing the edges of the wound [...] presently the terrible cutting was renewed & worse than ever, to separate the bottom, the foundation of this dreadful gland from the parts to which it

> adhered [...]. Oh Heavens! I then felt the Knife <rack>ling against the breast bone - scraping it! (Burney 1985: 612)

Burney uses plenty of evaluative and affective pain words, yet she comes across as remarkably brave and self-disciplined, considering the acuteness of pain we are invited to imagine. Indeed, the passage seems anything but hyperbolic. It is, however, essential that this description occurs in a private letter and thus has the status of a confidential unburdening to a relative, and was not meant for publication and thus subject to different rules of decorum and taboo.

In contrast, when the unlikeable main character in Atwood's novel *Bodily Harm* doubles over, collapses, writhes on the floor and thinks she will die because she has contracted diarrhoea in prison - while other inmates are tortured to death - the description of her agonized personal experience renders her contemptible rather than pitiable.

> Rennie doubles over [...] she can feel the sweat dripping down her back, she's dizzy, she hates pain. She's been invaded, usurped, germs taking over, betrayal of the body.
> [...] her head is the size of a watermelon, soft and pink, it's swelling up, she's going to burst open, she's going to die [...].
> "You okay?" says Loma. [...] "It's only turistas. Montezuma's Revenge, the tourists call it. Everyone gets it sooner or later. Take it from me, you'll live."
> (Atwood 1982: 86)

Hypochondria and exaggerated moaning and groaning are generally considered as contemptible and/or ridiculous in English and, indeed, European culture (viz. the figure of the malade imaginaire), unless the patient is a child, as in Hemingway's story "A Day's Wait," whom the reader regards with a mixture of pity and amusement.

How strongly pain descriptions are dependent not only on cultural taboos but also on genre conventions is evinced by Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, which reports in gruesome detail how the hero was tortured and slowly dismembered, but conceals the operation of pain on the body and leaves out all somatic details metonymically suggesting his agony.

> [...] but they [...] whipped them in a most deplorable and inhumane manner, rending the very flesh from their bones; [...] and then rubbed his wounds, to complete their cruelty, with Indian pepper [...] the exuctioner came, and first cut off his members, and threw them into the fire. After that, with an ill-favoured knife, they cut his ears, and his nose, and burned them; he still smoked on, as if nothing had touched him. Then they hacked off one of his arms, and still he bore up, and held

> his pipe. But at the cutting off the other arm, his head sunk, and his pipe dropped, and he gave up the ghost, without a groan, or a reproach. (Behn 1992: 140)

Oroonoko, who is modelled on the heroes of heroic tragedy, shows no outward signs of pain or emotional disturbance even when his wounds are rubbed with red pepper and he is tom limb by limb - descriptions which make the reader wince and give us "an opportunity to feel torture vicariously" (Campbell 1999: 275). In contrast to his supemational courage and stamina in facing physical pain, however, the hero showed plenty of distress in an earlier scene when he mourned the beloved wife he had just killed to save her from rape and enslavement (cf. Morris 1991: 58-60). His emotional agony indeed leaves him quite emasculated.

> But when he found she was dead [...] his grief swelled up to rage; he tore, he raved, he roared, like some monster of the wood [...]. A thousand times he turned the fatal knife that did the deed, towards his own heart [...] grief would get the ascendant of rage, and he would lie down by her side, and water her face with showers of tears [...]. (Behn 1992: 131 f.)

Display rules obviously decreed that a hero was allowed to verbalize emotional suffering at great length but could not give in to physical pain without loss of face.

Indeed, Elizabethan or seventeenth century prose texts do not spell out a victim's experience of and response to physical pain, though they may describe torture at length. As, for instance, in *The Unfortunate Traveller,* which employs horribly suggestive pain words and details the wounds produced on various parts of the body by diverse torture instruments. Nashe's readers, of course, were used to public executions and may have accepted forms of punishment that seem sickening to a modem sensibility, if the torture was inflicted on figures which were portrayed as inveterate villains (such as the Jew or Cutwolf)- The reader's sympathy for their suffering is also curbed by the absurd similes Nashe employs: "His nailes they ... under-propt... with sharpe prickes, like a Tailors shop window halfe open on a holy daie" (Nashe 1966: 316).

When it comes to descriptions of love, overstatement, one would think, is much more acceptable, indeed expected. Especially Elizabethan poetry is full of exstatic praises of a beloved or descriptions of love-sickness (as in Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* quoted as an epigraph), and who will not think of *Romeo and Juliet* when it comes to the portrayal of romantic love. Rhapsodic rhetoric of love, interestingly, is equally acceptable in women's poetry: Aphra Behn

gained a reputation for love poetry which inverts the traditional gender roles. In contrast, a marked absence of enthusiastic rhetoric, as in Cummings' poem "may I feel said he," which completely eschews expressions of rapture and insight into the lovers' minds, is likely to produce the impression of a merely casual love affair and emotional shallowness.

> "may I feel said he
> (i'll squeal said she/just once said he)
> it's fun said she/[...]
> (tiptop said he
> don't stop said she/ oh no said he)
> go slow said she [...]" (Cummings 1987: 1686)

How difficult and problematic it is to generalise on such issues, however, is proved by the fact that Lovelace's hyperbolic assertions of love for Clarissa, in the context of the novel, give the impression of self-stylization and performance rather than genuine emotion. The acceptability of hyperbole in love descriptions, indeed, is mainly true for poetry. In narrative, as opposed to poetry, different display rules seem to apply. The caution, "The lady does protest too much, methinks," apart from formulating a gendered display rule as regards romantic love vows, also applies to prose in general: a character who utters extravagant vows and declarations often stands in danger of losing credibility: being too elaborate, too artful and too insistent is regarded as suspicious. It is symptomatic that Virginia Woolf, when she enumerated the schoolgirls' models for romantic love rhetoric I quoted above, should have thought exclusively of poets: Shakespeare, Donne and Keats, each famous for rhapsodic love lyrics.

In general, love descriptions in prose tend to be much more restrained. Jane Austen, of course, is famous as an extreme case of reticence, avoiding any lengthy love scenes and famously cutting short reader expectations by refusing to put on paper what Emma said to Mr Knightley: "She spoke then, on being so entreated. - What did she say? - Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does" (Austen 1996: 354). Such stylistic restraint cannot merely be put down to nineteenth century female decorum. Almost 200 years later, when Winterson in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is hardly less reticent. When the lesbian heroine falls in love with another woman,

> [t]here was something crawling in my belly. I had an octopus inside me. And it was evening and it was morning; another day. After that, we did everything together, and I stayed with her as often as I could. [...] "Do you think this is Unnatural

> Passion?" I asked her once. "Doesn't feel like it. According to Pastor Finch, that's awful." She must be right, I thought. (Winterson 2001:86)

Body language, of course, is often made to stand in for verbal declarations: if a character exhibits somatic symptoms such as an increased heart rate, blushing, dizziness, physical weakness, inability to think, and the like (Kovecses 2000: 123f.), he or she is assumed to be in love. Jane Eyre is a case in point: her love is written on her body, though she is also explicit enough about her emotions (one of the many generic signs of romance in the novel).

> I was experiencing an ordeal: a hand of fiery iron grasped my vitals. Terrible moment: full of struggle, blackness, burning! Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped: and I must renounce love and idol. (Bronte 1966: 342)

On the whole, however, hyperbolic love rhetoric in prose can easily give the impression of sentimentality and is, indeed, the staple diet in the love stories of Robinson, Pilcher, Deveraux and the ilk, where authors dwell extensively on the overwrought feelings of their protagonists.

> "Look, you and I both know that we're attracted to each other. From the moment I first saw you my palms have been sweating." [...] Jace started to say something, but instead he pulled her into his arms and kissed her with the passion he'd been feeling since he met her. His hands ran over her back, up her neck, through her hair, then back down again, while his mouth overtook hers, his tongue touching hers, invading her mouth. (Deveraux 2007: 192 f.)

Alternatively, lengthy and ecstatic descriptions of love scenes are, of course, also found in erotic or pornographic literature. Texts like *Fanny Hill* brim with florid descriptions of lascivious touches, fires of passion pulsing through veins and similarly prurient passages.

Of course, in fiction the range of individual styles is enormous. Both Lawrence and Hardy, for instance, are canonical writers who do not shy away from lengthy descriptions of love and desire. The ecstatic description of Angel's love for Tess (focalized through the young man's point of view) indeed has a strong resemblance to poetry.

> How very lovable her face was to him. [...] her mouth he had seen nothing to equal on the face of the earth. To a young man with the least fire in him that little upward lift in the middle of her red top lip was distracting, infatuating, maddening. He had never before seen a woman's lips and teeth which forced upon his mind with such

> persistent iteration the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow.
> (Hardy 1974: 190)

Although Lawrence is famous for the convincing metaphors he finds for physical attraction, even in his fiction lengthy descriptions of desire often focus on obsession rather than love - as in "The Prussian Officer," or in "The Fox." The latter story extensively describes the madness of frustrated love, while the love scenes between the boy and March are comparatively short.

> He set his teeth, and for a moment went almost pale, yellow round the eyes with fury. He said nothing and saw nothing and felt nothing but a livid rage that was quite unreasoning. Balked! Balked again! Balked! He wanted the woman, he had fixed like doom upon having her. He felt that was his doom, his destiny, and his reward, to have this woman. She was his heaven and hell on earth, and he would have none elsewhere. (Lawrence 1960: 144)

Indeed, overstatement often spells out madness or infatuation rather than genuine love - as in the long and obsessive description the male narrator gives of the mysterious She in Rider-Haggard's novel. As soon as she has unveiled her face, the narrator falls under her spell, "eat[ing] out [his] heart in impotent desires" (Rider-Haggard 2001: 158). Her beauty blinds him, her silvery voice charms him, her perfume dazzles him.

> 1 could bear it no longer. 1 am but a man, and she was more than a woman. [...] then and there I fell upon my knees before her, and told her in a sad mixture of languages [...] that I worshipped her as never woman was worhsipped, and that I would give my immortal soul to marry her [...]. (Rider-Haggard 2001: 193)

What is described here, however, is not a genuine love scene, but, in fact, a confrontation with the abject, with a sexuality and a female power outside the social law, which is threatening madness and death to the man, not fulfilment. Similarly, the elaborate descriptions in Manley's *New Atalantis* depict obsessive erotic appetite and corrupt excess. The indulgence in sensuous detail and sophisticated elaboration mirror the characters' lack of moral restraint.

This paper has shown that images describing physical pain and love or lust tend to draw on a fairly limited fund of conceptual metaphors, though they can be linked in a variety of innovative combinations. It has also become obvious that the display rules for love and pain are not so antithetical in English culture as one might suppose. It is indisputable that rules of decorum in the descriptions of these emotions have a decisive influence on the reaction of readers to literary

texts. However, given the infinite variety of literary styles, it is, of course, difficult to formulate any rules. Whereas readers seem to expect hyperbole in poetry, it may (but need not!) give an impression of sentimental excess, insincerity or prurience in prose. Reticence may function as anti-climax, especially in poetry, whereas in prose both hyperbole and understatement may be equally effective. It is essential to remember, however, that response to emotional rhetoric in a particular text certainly depends not only on a successful conceptual blend to express the respective feeling and on the stylistic excess or restraint of its expression but on an almost infinite variety of interconnected effects relating to genre and point of view, but also to the gender and age of a speaker, and to the text's addressee and context. Descriptions employing very similar images or stylistic features may hence still challenge entirely different responses because of a reader's sense of what is appropriate for a man or a woman, a hero or a villain, for public display or private confession, for omniscient or focalised narration, for poetry or prose, in the past or in the present.

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Byronie Outcasts and Polish Exiles

Every student of Polish literature knows that English and German poetry played a significant role in the Polish Romantic breakthrough. Most of us studied the Byronie hero on the basis of Mickiewicz's translation of *The Giaour* at school, and view him as an antecedent of Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod,* the mysterious remorse-tom national avenger figure. But I strongly suspect that because we are so familiar with this subject, we tend to ignore the intricacies involved in the Polish reception of British literature at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Mickiewicz's pronounced aim was to create Polish national literature, which he perceived as only beginning to develop in the poetry of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and Franciszek Karpiński:

> Ancestors develop the language; that is what the poet has to find; that is what influences him. One has to wait a long time before the language [parallel to that] in which *Don Juan* was written develops.[1]

Byron's *Don Juan* with its complex challenge of literary and social conventions is seen here as an unachievable model. Mickiewicz believes that medieval ballads and romances offered the springboard on which English literature was able to develop, and such a tradition for him started only recently, that is at the end of the eighteenth century, to be developed in Polish poetry. In the case of Niemcewicz, translations and adaptations from English played a crucial part in this process.

What I propose to do in this paper is to examine Polish translations of two English poems dealing with the theme of exile: firstly Niemcewicz's translation of Matthew Lewis's poem "The Exile" and then Mickiewicz's translation of the "Good night" song from Canto I of *Childe Harold,* and show how two strongly stylized English poems drawing on popular conventions were rewritten to suit the Polish needs.

[1] "Przodki kształcą język, to poeta znajdować musi, to na niego oddziaływa. Nim w Polsce język, jakim *Don Żuan* pisany, ukształci się, długo czekać trzeba" (qtd. in Żmigrodzka 1956: 122), my own translation. All translations in this article are mine unless otherwise indicated.

But I would like to start, with the poem for which at that point Mickiewicz believed that it was not possible to create a Polish equivalent. In Canto II of Byron's *Don Juan* after the discovery of his affair with Julia, Juan bids farewell to his native Spain:

> "Farewell, my Spain! A long farewell!" he cried,
> "Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
> But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
> Of its own thirst to see again thy shore:
> Farewell, where Guadalquivir's waters glide!
> Farewell, my mother! And since all is o'er,
> Farewell, too dearest Julia! - (here he drew
> Her letter out again, and read it through.) (st. 18, Byron 1958: 63)

As Paul Elledge notes (1991: 43; 56 note 1), the passage records one of numerous "dissociative events" in Byron's poetry. Byron is clearly parodying conventional farewell poems and songs, and Juan's lament is soon to be cut short by a fit of retching caused by seasickness. The elegy on which Byron might possibly be drawing is Matthew Gregory Lewis's poem "The Exile," which was published in Lewis's *The Monk* and often reprinted in periodicals, for example, in Coleridge's review of the novel. In 1797 Coleridge had erroneously predicted that the "following exquisitely tender elegy [...] will melt and delight the heart, when ghosts and hobgoblins shall be found only in the lumber-garret of a circulating library" (Coleridge 1797). In *The Monk* the song appears as a lament of Gonzalvo on leaving Spain for Cuba, and is shown by Elvira to Lorenzo to prove that there is no greater torture than leaving one's homeland. We are dealing with a stylization of traditional farewell songs:

> Farewell, Oh native Spain! Farewell for ever!
> These banished eyes shall view thy coasts no more;
> A mournful presage tells my heart, that never
> Gonzalvo's steps again shall press thy shore. (Lewis 1998: 215)

By incorporating the cliched phrases and the actual rhyme (No more/shore) from "The Exile," Byron may be seen as exposing the predictability and banality in Juan's lament.

Interestingly, a translation of Lewis's poem closes the second volume of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz's *Miscellaneous Writings in Verse and Prose (Pisma rozmaite wierszem iprozą)* published in 1805, where it appears as "Wygnaniec" ("The Exile"), subtitled "Elegy imitated from the English, composed at sea on

the author's leaving his homeland in 1804" ("Elegia naśladowana z angielskiego; pisana na morzu w czasie oddalenia się autora z oyczyzny"). Right from the beginning Niemcewicz's tone is much more personal than that of Lewis's original:

> Żegnam cię o oyczyzno! żegnam cię na wieki!
> Smutne przeczucie w piersiach odzywa się tkliwych,
> Że te oczy, te łzami zroszone powieki
> Już więcey nie zobaczą twych brzegów szczęśliwych. (Niemcewicz 1805: 427)

> I bid thee farewell oh my homeland! I bid thee farewell for ever!
> A sad presage awakens in my tender bosom
> That these eyes, these tear-dimmed lids
> Will never again see thy happy shores.

Lewis's "native Spain" is replaced by "homeland" and "Gonzalvo" is replaced by the speaker whom the reader is clearly expected to identify with Niemcewicz, as suggested by the authorial note. While, as Juliusz Kleiner has noted (1981: 147—48, note 8), Niemcewicz is quite faithful to the original in spite of omitting two stanzas from Lewis's poem, his version is imbued with personal feeling. Lewis's generalized images tend to be replaced by much more particular and more strongly emotionally marked terms. Thus, for example, Lewis's lines (which echo Thomas Gray's elegy):

> No more my arms a Parent's fond embraces,
> No more my heart domestic calm must know;
> Far from these joys, with sighs which Memory traces,
> To sultry skies and distant climes I go. (Lewis 1998: 216)

Become in Niemcewicz's version:

> Już mnie matka do swego nie przytuli łona,
> Już nie uyrzę przyjaciół, ni braci kochanych;
> Próżno drogie wspomnienia wraca myśl strapiona,
> Spieszę do parnych niebios, i krain nieznanych.

> My mother will never again hold me to her bosom
> I will never again see my friends nor beloved brothers
> In vain do distressed thoughts trace fond memories
> I go to sultry skies and unknown lands.

The "parent" is substituted by "mother," abstract "domestic calm" and "joys" by the concrete "friends" and "brothers." Ifwe choose to look at Lewis's poem from

the post-colonial perspective, we could say that he uses the demonized vision of all the perils that await white man in the West Indies, where Gonzalvo goes as a Spanish colonist, to hyperbolize the speaker's alienation from society which he after all leaves because of his decision to marry for love. The horror of tigers, snakes, the yellow plague and the boiling heat which is bound to make him "die by piece-meal in the bloom of age" (Lewis 1998: 216) is nothing as compared to his homesickness. Though Niemcewicz includes Lewis's Gothicized exotic imagery in his adaptation, the images of mental agony of the speaker are presented in much more subdued tones without the strong medieval stylization, which is striking in Lewis.

Niemcewicz's adaptation of Lewis's "The Exile" was meant to be read as a personal confession of displacement on the part of the man who in 1804 thought that he was leaving his country for good to settle in the United States. Thus the theme of exile, which for Lewis was a pretext for a tender elegy, and which actually involved the colonization of the Caribbean, acquired poignant immediacy in the context of early nineteenth-century Polish history.

For Byron, on the other hand, Juan's homesickness is partly a natural feeling fuelled by his love for Julia, and partly a re-enactment of conventional grief fed by cultural conventions, which is emphasized by Juan casting himself in the role of an exile and a constant lover. Byron's narrator sympathizes with his naivety, simultaneously assuming the stance of a man of the world:

> So Juan wept, as wept the captive Jews
> By Babel's waters, still remembering Sion:
> I'd weep - but mine is not a weeping Muse,
> And such light griefs are not a thing to die on;
> Young men should travel, if but to amuse
> Themselves; and the next time their servants tie on
> Behind their carriages their new portmanteau,
> Perhaps it may be lined with this my canto. (st. 16, Byron 1958: 62-3)

Already in 1812, in the song "Good night" from Canto I of *Childe Harold* Byron provided a radical rewriting of the traditional farewell song, and it is intriguing why this song was one of the first poems by Byron that Adam Mickiewicz translated. It was published in *Dziennik Warszawski* (Warsaw Journal 3: 69-72) as "Pożegnanie Czajld Harolda" ("Childe Harold's Farewell") in 1826 at the time when Mickiewicz was exiled into Russia, travelling in the Crimea. However, we know that he had started working on his translation of "Good Night" in May 1823 in Vilnius and Odyniec recollects Mickiewicz suddenly

growing pale on reading out the words "Kiedy nikt po mnie nie płacze" (When no one cries for me) from his translation (Kleiner 1995: 452, note 12).

Byron's text appears in Canto I as a song that Harold sings on leaving England. It glorifies the life of the self-exiled, alienated protagonist, who has no regrets on leaving his homeland.[2] In his preface Byron declares that the poem was suggested by "Lord Maxwell's Good Night" from Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (Byron 1980: 4), but the Scottish ballad is essentially verbally echoed only in the opening "adieu" and closing "good night." Lord Maxwell bids farewell to his mother, his wife and his lands, which he has to flee as he is guilty of murder he committed avenging the death of his father:

> Adieu! Dumfries, my proper place,
> But and Carlaverock fair!
> Adieu! my castle of the Thrieve,
> Wi' a' my buildings there;
> Adieu! Lochmaben's gate sae fair,
> The Langholm-holm, where birks there be:
> Adieu! my ladye and only joy,
> For, trust me, I may not stay wi' thee.
> "Lord Maxwell's Good Night"

Byron's Harold has no regrets and flaunts his self sufficiency and cynicism as contrasted with natural homesickness of his page and of his yeoman. The very focus of the song is on the moment when the "native shore" disappears from sight at sunset. While in Lewis's "Exile" the speaker wants the ship to keep still so that he can behold his native shore, Harold embraces the swift movement of the ship and glorifies his alienation: "With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go / Athwart the foaming brine; / Nor care what land thou bear'st me to, / So not again to mine." This is not to say that that there are no traces of melancholy in the poem, and it is particularly these phrases that Mickiewicz emphasizes and develops in his translation.

In his fundamental work on Mickiewicz, Juliusz Kleiner expresses his bewilderment on Mickiewicz's decision to translate Byron's poem:

> One cannot but wonder how someone who on publishing the poem had already experienced bidding farewell to his native land could have included in the editions of his poetry stanzas whose beginning and end: "Fare thee well, my beloved na-

[2] For a reading of the poem as fraught with ambiguities concerning Byron's attitude towards parting, see Elledge 1986.

tive land," "Fare thee well, dear homeland" ironically distort allegedly heartfelt epithets.[3]

However, it is hard to read Mickiewicz's translation as a cynical version of traditional farewell songs. Wacław Borowy (1999: 169-70) argues that Mickiewicz completely ignores the ironic overtones of the original and imbues his version with strong lyricism. Or it may be more accurate to say that through his choice both of the vocabulary and of the rhythm he underscores the emotional ambiguity of the song: the notes of lament are more markedly audible under the decadence and world-weariness of Harold.

Adieu, adieu! My native shore
Fades o'er the waters blue;
The Night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.
Yon Sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight;
Farewell awhile to him and thee,
My native Land - Good Night! (Byron 1980: 13)

Characteristically, Mickiewicz appropriates Byron's text to express the lament over the life of an exile:

Bywaj mi zdrowy, kraju kochany!
Już w mglistej nikniesz powłoce,
Świsnęły wiatry, szumią bałwany
I morskie ptactwo świergoce.
Dalej za słońcem, gdzie jasną głowę
W zachodnie pogrąża piany!
Tymczasem słońce, bywaj mi zdrowe,
Bywaj zdrów, kraju kochany! (Mickiewicz 1998: 158)

Byron's "adieu" is translated as "fare thee well," which might be a conscious echo of Byron's famous "Fare Thee Well," the translation of which entitled "Bądź zdrowa" Niemcewicz published in 1820. Mickiewicz in the very first line uses the apostrophe to "[his] beloved country," which replaces Byron's "native shore." The speaker's alienation from the world expressed by Byron's

[3] Dziwić się można, że strofy, w których początek i koniec: "Bywaj mi zdrowy, kraju kochany!" - "Bądź zdrowa, luba ojczyzno!" - ironią wykrzywia epitety rzekomo serdeczne - że strofy takie pomieścił w wydaniach poezyj swoich ten, który drukując je wiedział już, co znaczy pożegnanie ziemi rodzimej (Kleiner 1995: 453).

"And now I'm in the world alone, / upon the wide, wide sea" (obviously inspired by Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner)* is replaced by "I am roaming in the wide world *I* Living the life of an exile" ("Teraz po świecie błądzę szerokim /1 pędzę życie tułacze," Mickiewicz 1998: 160-61, st. 9). A rather condescending Byronie refusal to "groan for others / When none will sigh for me?" is substituted by the melancholic "Za kim mam płakać? Za kim i po czym / Kiedy nikt po mnie nie płacze" (Why should I cry / For whom and over whom? / When no one cries for me). Mickiewicz is obviously not willing to faithfully follow the Byronie model, though there are enough echoes of the original to make Kleiner wonder why someone as devoted to his homeland as Mickiewicz could have chosen this passage for his translation (Kleiner 1995: 453). There is a certain dramatic irony in the fact that Mickiewicz made his translation in May 1823, a few months before his arrest for being a member of a nationalist organisation in October and a sentence of exile to Russia as though anticipating his future life of an exile.

In his unpublished article on Goethe and Byron written in 1827 Mickiewicz presents Byron's poetry as personifying the British spirit:

> American Revolution and the long and continuous war with France, party divisions among the English themselves - all that preoccupied the public; there emerged a great number of new conceptions, ideas and emotions; however, there was no poet to express them. That was an enormous mass of combustible subterranean materials, searching for a new crater in the local mountains.[4]

Mickiewicz seems to be drawing on Byron's description of poetry as "the lava of the imagination" (Byron 1974: 179), but he replaces Byron's individual torrent of passions and thoughts with the new ideas of the turbulent turn of the century in Britain. This is linked to his belief that poetry needs to be perceived in historical terms as a product of a given age and culture. Mickiewicz sees Byron's poetry as subjective, characterized by passion, but this, for him, is indicative of the British feeling at the time. Byron is presented as the one providing other European poets with the creative impulse, including implicitly Mickiewicz, whom another Polish poet Krasiński referred to as the "Polish Byron" (qtd. in Windakiewicz 1914).

[4] Rewolucja amerykańska, uporczywa i długa wojna przeciwko Francji, stronnictwa dzielące opinią samych Anglików, wszystko to zajmowało publiczność; wyrobiła się wielka liczba nowych wyobrażeń, myśli i uczuć, brakło tylko poety, który by je wyśpiewał. Była to ogromna masa palnych podziemnych materiałów, szukająca w okolicznych górach nowego krateru (Mickiewicz 1999:250-51).

Mickiewicz's reading of Byronic poetry as originating in the spirit of the age has its counterpart in the twentieth and twenty-first century criticism. Philip Martin reads the Byronic hero in *Childe Harold* as

> the psychological consequence of [...] alienation from the meaningful progress of history, a piece of self-fashioning which, however equivocal and awkward, represents a detached and wounded psychology that Byron understands as appropriate to the modem condition of historical and political bafflement. (Martin 2004: 97)

This may very well account for the popularity of Byron's poetry on the Continent, much more directly affected by the vagaries of history than Britain. Mickiewicz's translation of "Good Night" illustrates on the one hand the attractiveness of Byron's sceptical and misanthropic stance; on the other hand, it reveals Mickiewicz's unwillingness to embrace it full-heartedly. His speaker would like to break free of the societal bonds, but cannot help expressing his emotional ties to his homeland.

In his recent lecture Stuart Curran spoke of displacement as one of the central themes in the European literature of the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and saw this as a political and economic consequence of turbulent political events, starting with the partitions of Poland through the French Revolution to the Napoleonic wars. He suggested that Byron and Shelley went against this general pattern and embraced "placelessness," which could be attributed to their aristocratic, cosmopolitan background. If one accepts his claim, it becomes intriguing why precisely those two English poets appealed most to the imagination of the displaced and dispossessed in such countries as Poland and Greece. Of course, the most obvious reason lay in their well known declarations of opposition to all forms of tyranny. But I would argue that at least in the case of Mickiewicz's readings of Byron's poetry there occurred a case of appropriation of Byron's "placelessness" similar to the process which I presented in the case of Niemcewicz's translation of Lewis's "Exile." What in Byron's poetry serves as an expression of placelessness becomes transformed into a lyrical expression of the sense of displacement. Unlike Byron's Harold, who eagerly embraces his cosmopolitan alienation from his homeland, Mickiewicz's speaker depicts himself as a "displaced" person, not surprisingly as after all he is writing in Polish, the language of the displaced.

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Weak Authorities: Authorship and Meaning in the 1890s

When, in the preface to *David Copperfield,* Charles Dickens refers to the main character as the author's "favourite child" ("like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is DAVID COPPERFIELD," 1965: 11), he is not only reinforcing the link between real and fictional world, and adding a supplementary guarantee of truthfulness and authenticity to his novel; he is also speaking of the relationship between the author and his imaginary progeny as if it were a blood link. This is symptomatic for the Dickensian model of authorship - one that is based on intimacy and friendship with the reader (Ferguson 2001: 740-44). This presupposes a common ground of shared values, and a relationship of mutual understanding and trust. As Susan L. Ferguson notes in her analysis of Victorian authorship, "Dickens initiated the characteristically Victorian relationship between the writer and his public, a 'communion' described by Thackeray as 'something continual, confidential, something like personal affection'" (qtd. in Ferguson 2001: 743). Dickens himself states as much when he declares that he wants his relationship with his audience to be governed by "a perfectly unfettered, cordial, friendly sentiment" (qtd. in Ferguson 2001: 742).

This cordial "communion" is not merely a matter of public readings and popularity of the author as a person (which Dickens was particularly successful at), but also a matter of textual protocols. For the Victorian reader, the author always hovered behind the text as a source of meaning and legitimacy. This presence was surely not a real, palpable one - unless it was, like in the case of Dickens, sustained by the voice of the performer of public readings - but the Victorian reader was used to searching for a "speaker" who vouched for the truth value of the fiction. In his discussion of the relationship among authorship, implied author, and narrative voice, Richard Aczel (1998: 475) quotes Didier Coste's definition of the authorial voice as "the product of the reader's quest for the origin of the text." This definition is particularly true in the case of the Victorian reader, whose quest for an author-image behind the text is part and parcel of the interpretative process. The act of reading involved the

underlying assumption of an authorial presence, and meaning was implicitly equated with tracing back authorial intentionality. At the other end, writers were aware of this assumption, and the way in which they encoded their authorial position in the text reflected it. There are several ways in which the authorial figure descends into the text, the most obvious of which being the use of "I" either in first person narratives or in the narrator's comments or digressions. As Hochman (1996: 177) demonstrates, "In the nineteenth century the storytelling 'I' in fiction was emphatically associated with the figure of the novelist, a human being who seemed to become accessible to the reader through the process of reading." Additionally, such implicit equivalences between author and narrator were frequently underscored by the existence of recognizably autobiographical elements (like in the case of Dickens), and by the presence of commentary and evaluation from the narrator, who explicitly or implicitly positions himself in relation to the value system promoted by the text (a value system which he shares with his public). These elements amount to a very powerful authorial presence in the text, one that combines the moral authority of Carlyle's writer-teacher and the intimacy of the Dickensian "friend."

Towards the end of the century, with the arising complications in moral stance, the intensifying of textual experimentation, and the shifting role of the reader, the position of the author became less straightforward. Speaking of shifting views towards authorship in the work of Henry James, Hochman (1996: 177) notes that "[bjetween the 1880s and the tum-of-the-century [...] several changes occurred in widely-held assumptions about the pleasures of fiction-reading and the grounds of connection between writer and reader. Like the contact between doctor and patient, manufacturer and customer, novelist and editor (and many others), the relationship between reader and author was transformed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by a sense of growing distance and impersonality." What was lost was precisely the sense of intimacy and shared ground omnipresent in the work of the likes of Dickens. "The common belief that fiction fosters an imaginatively rich and even personal relationship between writer and reader was progressively eroded in the final decades of the century," Hochman notes, tracing this tendency at a textual level in what she calls "the rhetoric of authorial self-effacement" (1996: 177). Most 1890s writers no longer saw themselves as teachers/preachers, partly because there was no longer a stable shared set of values to be transmitted or reinforced. The changes in the economic aspects of publishing also meant that they were targeting a different type of audience than the huge masses which Dickensian

friendliness had rallied - an audience with which they might or might not be on "friendly" terms.

The present paper will look at several modes of "authorial self-effacement" in the fiction of the 1890s, by focusing on authors some of whom are minor, however symptomatic of the trends which melt into the experimentalism of the 1890s and ultimately into the evolutions that lead to Modernism. The first of these modes is that of Medievalism, illustrated through William Morris's *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair*, where "authorial self-effacement" follows a model of collective authorship. Secondly, George Du Maurier's *Trilby* offers a model of the author who relinquishes his power politely to the reader; he owes a lot to the Victorian author-reader complicity, but is far less certain of the meanings he wants to convey through it. Thirdly, the more experimental writers of the 1890s (Oscar Wilde, but also the younger Aubrey Beardsley and Max Beerbohm) use self-contradiction intentionally, from a very assertive position which makes meaning disruption even more intense; in the case of Beardsley and Beerbohm, this is seconded by irony and self-irony.

The socialist William Morris advocates the return to an idyllic classless society based on a fantasy of the Middle Ages, which involves a model of the artist-craftsman whose humanism is less individualistic, and voice far less assertive than that of the Mid-Victorian writer. As a consequence, in both Morris's literary and visual work there is a traceable attempt at replicating the medieval model of collective authorship, in which the artist perceives himself at most as a craftsman whose personal identity is unimportant, and who frequently works together with other craftsmen. In *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair* (1895), he replicates the neutral voice of the folk tale, whose shared authorship gives it a collective, traditional authority - not one based on the genius or truthfulness of one single writer, but one that sounds as if it has been legitimized by the story having been told and retold over centuries. Morris as a Victorian vanishes entirely behind the medieval mask, with hardly any authorial intervention in the text. On the one or two occasions when authorial intrusion does occur in the narrative, Morris suitably employs the first person plural in a way which once again suggests that the author is blending in with a whole community of storytellers: "But now leave we Christopher and these good fellows of the Tofts and turn to Goldilind" (1995: Ch. 11). This seems to involve the reader in the story-sharing community, in which the voice that tells the story is less important than the story itself.

Moreover, one of the instances of authorial presence in the text actually weakens rather than strengthens the position of the author, by emphasizing,

in the same demure first person plural, a limitation in knowledge: "Now as to Squire Simon, whether the devil helped him, or his luck, or were it his own cunning and his horse's stoutness, we wot not" (Ch. 9). The text is pervaded by a lack of authorial assertiveness, although this weakening of the authorial position does not dramatically disrupt the Victorian complicity between author and reader. The authorial presence is discrete and muted, yet the story still unfolds against the backdrop of shared values, with no ambiguity as to what the moral stance towards characters and situations should be. The fairy tale structure serves Morris's socialist ideas in that it allows him to make his statement in a way which appears natural, commonsensical, and universally recognizable. The author is not needed in the text, as he speaks with the voice of communal tradition. He does not need to be an assertive presence, as the text stands on its own, as if ready to be perpetuated by the next generation of storytellers.

In the work of George Du Maurier, on the other hand, the weakening of the authorial position arises from quite different sources. As a *Punch* cartoonist, Du Maurier began as a satirist whose critical stance and support for the mid-Victorian moral values was unmistakable. However, with his late literary work of the 1890s and especially with *Trilby* (1894), Du Maurier's authorial stance becomes more complicated. If his formation as a visual artist occurred earlier, in a mid-Victorian cultural atmosphere, his formation as a writer, in later life, in the company of literary friends such as Henry James, displays adherence to another, more innovative set of aesthetic values.

Trilby weaves together autobiographical notations based on the author's own experience of the artistic milieu and the Gothic plot of the young Paris girl who falls prey to the hypnotic powers of the evil musical genius Svengali. The text overlaps at least three different genres - the Late Victorian Gothic, the Mid-Victorian memoir/ autobiographical fiction, and the Decadent novel relating the bohemian lives of artists. Du Maurier preserves the satirist's detachment even in the portrayal of the protagonists, thus relativizing his attitude towards them, and inducing a critical-sympathetic reaction on behalf of the reader.

Consequently, the moral positioning of the authorial voice becomes less straightforward. While Svengali is clearly on the demonic side, exerting at most the fascination of pure evil, the protagonists (Little Billee and Trilby herself), as well as the host of secondary characters that surround them, are treated with a combination of approval and disapproval, warmth and biting irony, drama and humour, which dissolve Du Maurier's authorial stance. He stands behind the text as a shifting and indecisive figure, whose presence is less that of an

authority summoned to confirm the truth value of the text and more that of a commentator who openly declares his limitations.

Indeed, authorial intrusions are very frequent in the text, unlike in the case of Morris. The colloquial, informal tone of such intrusions has a playful familiarity which would not have suited the *illo tempore* solemnity of the latter. However, like in Morris's novel, the authorial voice states its impotence, its lack of knowledge and its indecision on almost every occasion. In the rendering of Trilby's vocal feats when under the influence of Svengali, the authorial voice plays upon its own incapacity to render the whole beauty of the music, and then, still playfully, claims that the best reports of Trilby's voice are inaccessible to him: "Would that I could transcribe here Berlioz's famous series of twelve articles, entitled 'La Svengali,' " which unfortunately "are now out of print," while Théophile Gautier's article is lost because "I forget in which journal this eloquent tribute appeared" (1994: 253-54). Du Maurier is using here one of the favourite strategies of the fin de siècle Gothic - namely he understates and under-explains at the moments when the reader expects a hyperbole, thus relying on the reader's imagination to maximize horror. But it also simultaneously implies that the author relinquishes his hold on the narrative to a certain extent, placing himself in a less authoritative position than had hitherto been common in fiction.

The authorial voice in *Trilby* is polite and civilized, humouring the reader, often announcing what the text is about to do and why - yet often ironic in its make-believe humility. At first sight, Du Maurier speaks in a very Dickensian voice, professing the friendliness and intimacy that pervaded the work of the mid-Victorian writer. The authorial "I" descends on several occasions into the third person narrative to comment, digress or evaluate. However, while in Dickens the authorial presence retains its amiable yet indisputable authority, Du Maurier adopts a far weaker and more indecisive position. In contrast, Du Maurier's authorial intrusions are almost always associated with instances of powerlessness and moral ambiguity. In the initial description of Trilby, in which we are told that "she had all the virtues but one" (1994: 40), the authorial "I" descends into the text to confess to his limitations: "I have found it impossible so to tell her history as to make it quite fit and proper reading for the ubiquitous young person so dear to us all" (Du Maurier 1994: 40). Trilby's lack of virtue must be mentioned, but there is no "proper" way of putting it. "Most deeply to my regret," the narrator continues, "For I had fondly hoped it might one day be said of me that whatever my other literary shortcomings might be, I at least had never penned a line which a pure-minded young British mother

might not read aloud to her little blue-eyed babe as it lies sucking its little bottle in its little bassinette," yet "Fate has willed it otherwise" (Du Maurier 1994: 41). The author playfully declines his responsibility towards his fictional world, attributing its workings not to himself as puppeteer in chief, but to "Fate." He mimes a sigh of resignation in face of his linguistic and authorial powerlessness, while simultaneously providing the reader with a moral portrait that is highly ambiguous. If in the case of Dickens moral sympathies were as clear-cut as they could be, in Du Maurier "poor Trilby's one shortcoming," which the author wishes he "could duly express in some not too familiar medium-in Latin or Greek, let us say" (1994:41), is presented with both overt condemnation and covert sympathy. The shared system of values is still alluded to (the virtues and vices mentioned are still recognizably Victorian), yet what is labelled as a vice is also excused by other qualities ("she was the warmest, most helpful, and most compassionate of friends," "she had no vanity" and had "a virginal heart," Du Maurier 1994: 42), and even turned into a lovable quality: "she followed love for love's sake only, now and then, as she would have followed art if she had been a man" (Du Maurier 1994: 41). Vice and virtue become overlapped to the point in which the narrator himself refuses to choose "Whether it be an aggravation of her misdeeds or an extenuating circumstance" (Du Maurier 1994: 41), thus relinquishing his position as holder of moral solutions, and allowing a sense of uncertainty to pervade the story. This ambivalence is heightened and complicated by irony and self-irony: Trilby herself is treated with simultaneous sympathy and irony, such as when she is said to have "Sheer gaiety of heart and genial good-fellowship, [and] the difficulty of saying nay to earnest pleading" (Du Maurier 1994: 42), i.e. to be ready to engage in sexual activities because of the fact that she is a friendly girl who is unable to say no.

Similarly, the authorial voice is also self-ironic, as the humble account of his inabilities is always made with a wink of complicity towards the reader: when he descends into the autobiographical account of quite recognizable characters who inhabited Late Victorian studios (and would thus be perceived as an "eye witness account" by the reader - one that should confer extra authority to the authorial voice), the narrator glosses: "It might be worth while my trying to sketch some of the more noteworthy [characters], now that my story is slowing for a while - like a French train when the engine-driver sees a long curved tunnel in front of him, as I do - and no light at the other end!" (Du Maurier 1994: 107) The narrator is still an engine driver, but one whose influence upon the pre-determined track and travel speed is very limited. The literary ride, upon

which his job as an author seems to have embarked him more or less willingly, is hardly controllable, it slows down and speeds up by its own accord, and proves to be slightly frightening, what with the dark tunnels ahead. The metaphor is revealing: the responsibility of taking readers to a destination (one that the engine driver seems quite unaware of) belongs to either "Fate," or the railway company, but certainly not to the author.

In Oscar Wilde's work, the systematic use of contradiction (contradiction of readers' expectations, contradiction as rhetorical mechanism, within the omnipresent paradoxes, and self-contradiction) results in a noticeable weakening of authorial position, perhaps best illustrated by *The Portrait of Mr W.* 77., in which, despite the use of the first person narrative and of the narrative voice which rings distinctly Wildean, the reader is left without any authorial anchor to guarantee the truth value of the ideas unfolded in the text.

In a Victorian novel, the first person narrative would normally have endowed the text with more credibility, as it would have been "emphatically associated with the figure of the novelist, a human being who seemed to become accessible to the reader through the process of reading" (Hochman 1996: 177). The Victorian mind would readily have embarked with what it perceived as "Wilde" upon the voyage of discovering Cyril Graham's theory. This identification would have been reinforced by both the essay-like tone of most of the narrative and by the Wildean ring of statement on forgeries and aestheticism in the beginning: "I insisted that [the] so-called forgeries were merely the result of an artistic desire for perfect representation; that we had no right to quarrel with an artist for the conditions under which he chooses to present his work; and that all Art being to a certain degree a mode of acting, an attempt to realise one's own personality on some imaginative plane out of reach of the trammelling accidents and limitations of real life, to censure an artist for a forgery was to confuse an ethical with an aesthetical problem" (Wilde 2001b: 80). Recognisable ideas from Wilde's own aesthetics are present in the passage - such as the perfection of representation which overrides both artistic intentionality and any ethical concerns; the importance of masks; and the separation between ethics and aesthetics. Such ideas are recurrent in Wilde's writing, and repeatedly voiced in works where one presupposes an unquestionable authorial intention endorsing them - such as the essays or the Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Wilde 2001a: 7), where one expects (at least in theory) to find "Wilde's own" ideas.

However, the very same statement raises questions about the ethical position of the "author," as he supports forgeries, an idea which the Victorian reader is quite likely not to share. Thus, it questions the identification of the reader with

the author as a moral centre of the work, and anticipates the crisis of authorship that will subsequently be dramatized by the story. But at this stage this signal remains a mere foreshadowing, and is soon forgotten in the incursion Erskine offers into Cyril Graham's theories regarding Shakespearean authorship. While the theory unfolds, the narrator retains a tone of commonsensical disbelief towards both Cyril and Erskine, placing himself on the same side of the argument as the reader, and sharing the latter's (and the Victorian) "common knowledge" of the identity of W. H. The reader's identification with the narrator's position is almost complete, with Wilde's authorial figure constantly in the background, which makes the reversal of positions even more alienating. When the narrator exclaims to Erskine, "I believe in Willie Hughes!" (Wilde 2001b: 83), the reader is left disconcerted, and the identification between narrator and author is shattered. In what follows, the role of the "voice of reason" and common sense is switched several times between the two main characters, Erskine and the narrator, to the point in which the reader is left with no one to trust, and the authorial identification with the narrator is completely annihilated.

Moreover, problematic authorship is also the main theme of the story. The search for the meaning of Shakespeare's sonnets becomes a search for biographical details, re-enacting Victorian interpretative habits, which too readily (in Wilde's view) equate artistic truth with real-life truth, and aesthetic meaning with authorial intentionality. The incursion in Shakespearean authorship proves fascinating, but futile. It reads as a symmetrical counterpart to Henry James' *The Figure in the Carpet:* the latter dramatizes the search for an overarching meaning, for the central "design" in a work of art, in much the same way in which Wilde dramatizes the quest for the author's biographical person in relation to the work and to its meaning. Both stories are designed to disprove the possibility of arriving at authorial intentionality, and in both of them the consequences of this fallacy are just as deadly. As Erskine declares, "there is something fatal about the idea" (Wilde 2001b: 83). Once again, like in both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Figure in the Carpet*, playing with the boundaries between literature and reality seems to unleash monsters, and provides the ground for an uncanny, and (in *The Picture of Dorian Gray)* even Gothic development of the plot. Interestingly, this uncanny development unfolds on a level which once again increases the distance from any possibility of a literal or biographical interpretation of the story, and makes identification between the narratorial "I," or any of the characters, and the authorial position even less likely.

Thus, in *The Portrait of Mr W. H.*, authorship is systematically attacked from a multiplicity of directions, both by the text itself and from within the

fictional world of the text. Where Shakespearean authorship is concerned, details of the author's biography are sought in order to legitimize a certain interpretation of his works - yet some of these details are unreachable, as the existence of Willie Hughes can neither be proved, nor disproved; others are simply invented - such as the portrait, commissioned to corroborate literary evidence with extra-literary evidence, as if somehow anchoring the theory into the real world were the only way of proving it beyond the shadow of a doubt. Although the appearance of the portrait suddenly seems to confirm the validity of the theory, the proof that the portrait is a forgery does not implicitly disprove it either. Neither is it proved, nor disproved by the two main voices in the story - Erskine and the narrator. Erskine's own suicide at the end, mimicking Cyril Graham's last and extreme attempt to prove the theory, is just as fake as the portrait. The revelation that Erskine has actually died from quite different causes leaves the reader in the total dark about whether he eventually believed in the theory or not. Implicitly, the reader is left in the dark as to who to side with, as both Erskine's and the narrator's belief in the theory is eventually uncertain. The only possible moral of this parable is that there is no possible moral, or at least that conventional ways of reading, based on inferring a stable author behind the text, will not yield one.

As for the portrait itself, its authorship could not be harder to pin down: it is allegedly painted by an unknown Elizabethan artist, who turns out to be an obscure contemporary painter who has forged it for money. His authorship is illicit, and by force of circumstances the work must stand on its own, the link with its source not only completely severed, but misleading. No tracing of authorial intentionality or "message" is possible in this case because the painting is conceived to misdirect any interpretative approach based on extra-textual elements. If the viewer attempts to interpret by contextualization, then he is doomed to failure, as he will see the work through the fake context of the Elizabethan age.

Consequently, the story lists a whole range of counter-arguments to authorial authority over the text: narrators are, and are not identifiable with authors; biographical details are elusive, and easy to forge; authors can be whimsical, and change their mind after, or even during text production; they can be completely unknown, or put on a mask and pretend to be someone else altogether (like in the case of the forged painting). Thus, authorial intentionality remains beyond reach, and the author is completely effaced.

The quest for the origin of the text is proved to be an interpretative fallacy, just as in James's *The Figure in the Carpet.* Yet, at the same time, it exerts an

ongoing fascination, as if Wilde recognized it as a need of the reader, but one that will be systematically refused by the text. Just as the condition of the artist remains, romantically, that of not being understood, the condition of the reader should involve an acceptance of limitations in terms of understanding textual meaning. Aesthetic communication is a fake (or, in less offensive terms, virtual) communication which takes place at the level of the text, but it forbids any true communication between the real, biographical persons of author and reader.

Like Oscar Wilde, both Aubrey Beardsley and Max Beerbohm put on textual masks to the point in which their authorial position becomes indiscernible; like Wilde, they both possess paradoxically strong voices, but voices to which they add their own mark - a dimension of self-irony. And, this time quite unlike Wilde, who programmatically deletes any allusion to his biographical presence in his fiction, and even in his essays, Beardsley and Beerbohm both project themselves into the text, be it literary or visual, and both deconstruct their presence until it bears no identification with any definitive authorial authority. Like the Great Masters, they draw self-portraits, or include self-portraits in larger compositions, but these are stylized or caricatured. Beardsley's prose sometimes includes a narratorial "I," but one that mimics weakness and humility. Beerbohm writes his fiction and essays in a way that often resembles memoirs, blending autobiography and fiction until they become indiscernible and the reader is lost among the various authorial masks.

Thus, in Beardsley's *Story of Venus and Tannhäuser*, the authorial "I" is present, but misleading, and not authoritative. In the complimentary letter that serves as an introduction, Beardsley adopts a pose of humility towards his invented patron, and an apologetic tone for the naughtiness of his own text, which clearly place the authorial voice already in the realm of the fictional. The tone is self-ironic, mimicking an old-fashioned submissiveness towards a figure of authority, as Beardsley speaks of himself as a "humble scrivener" (Beardsley and Glassco 1959: 15), but the addressee himself is an object of irony, which denounces the whole humbleness as subversive. Just as subversive is the playfully underscored weakness of the authorial intrusions in the rest of the story, where the voice echoes Dickensian friendliness and displays an impotence a la Du Maurier, but at points in the text where the naughtiness builds up to a maximum. Thus, on several occasions, the narrator declares his limitations and his incapacity to render fully the details of the erotic encounters described, yet the eroticism is maximised rather than attenuated by this playful understatement. Due to the unrestrained explicitness of the erotic details in the story, the reader can only doubt the narrator's claimed incapacity to say everything out loud.

Therefore, the narrator places himself in a position of diminished reliability, and the gap between this narratorial mask and the biographical person of the writer, already established by the lack of autobiographical associations and by the utterly fictional introduction, is further deepened, despite the fact that there are several authorial alter egos in the story (besides Tannhäuser himself, there is a character named the "Abbé"- a clear play on Beardsley's own initials - yet with no other identifiable authorial function).

In Beerbohm's prose, fictional or non-fictional, irony once again leaves his authorial stance ambiguous - maybe even more ambiguous than in the case of Oscar Wilde, as in a piece *The Pervasion of Rouge*, the reader is unsure whether Beerbohm criticizes Decadence, is affiliated with it, or both. The short story *The Happy Hypocrite* (1897) further illustrates this use of irony as a vehicle of authorial self-effacement, despite the fact that, once again, the author explicitly writes himself into the text. The story is written in the third person, but with a very intrusive first person narrator, commenting and digressing, especially over the first pages, upon his main character, the decadent Lord George Hell. The narrator constantly evaluates and positions himself in relation to the character, in a way which, in someone like Dickens, would have been a mark of ethical complicity between author and reader. However, in Beerbohm the ironic tone undermines this complicity, and induces a degree of detachment.

Thus, very early on the narrator waives his opportunity to fully describe the "naughtiness" of his protagonist: "I will not trouble my little readers with a long recital of his great naughtiness. But it were well they should know that he was greedy, destructive, and disobedient" (Beerbohm 1940: 665). This playfully diminutive treatment of his audience, addressed as "little readers," as if the story were a story for children, places the narrator in a position of authority; he chooses to leave out parts of the story - simultaneously mimicking a friendly protectiveness towards the reader, and flashing at him the superiority of the ironist. But he is also quick to decline explicitly any responsibilities in making judgments about the character, yet at the same time implying what the judgment should be: "My little readers will then, I think, acknowledge that any angry judgment they may have passed upon him must be reconsidered and, it may be, withdrawn. I will leave his lordship in their hands" (Beerbohm 1940: 665). Lord George Hell is presented as being highly "naughty;" then, the reader is told authoritatively that he "must" reconsider any "angry judgment" on him, because he "did, at last, atone for all his faults, in a way that was never revealed to the world during his lifetime" (Beerbohm 1940: 665); and authority is waived immediately, as "his lordship" is left "in [the readers'] hands." This

announces a story of sin and repentance, possibly one with a moral, as would be fit for a young audience; however, it also announces a story in which the whole parable may unfold in the register of parody: from the very beginning, Lord George Hell's evil nature is caricatured and ridiculed. His very name signals this, alongside the menial sins he is condemned for - such as the fact that "he often sat up at Carlton House until long after bed-time, playing at games" and "he generally ate and drank more than was good for him" (Beerbohm 1940: 665).

Despite his initial demonstrations of authority, the narrator also appears slightly unsure of what is going on in his third person narrative: "I think he was proud of being horrid" (Beerbohm 1940: 665). He uses elements of the genre of the memoir - the one which was later on to become his personal mark (such as, for instance, in his 1919 story collection *Seven Men,* where fiction and memoir are welded together until they become indistinguishable). He uses the "I" of the eye witness who cares for the accuracy of his report - as the story comes complete with footnotes and references to invented quotations. However, the eye witness account is undermined by the fact that the narrator has witnessed everything but what is essential for the story: "I am glad I never saw his lordship" (Beerbohm 1940: 666). The very eye witness status of the narrative voice is thus tinged with self-irony, as it displays an infallibility fraught with limitations.

The narrator sometimes resorts to an inclusive "we" to denote the complicity with his readers: "after this, we can hardly be surprised when we read that he "seldom sat down to the fashionable game of Limbo with less than four, and sometimes with *as many as seven aces up his sleeve.* We can only wonder that he was tolerated at all" (Beerbohm 1940: 667). Thus, he hints at the shared ground of moral values that had been the basis of narrative protocols in Victorian fiction, but does so playfully, once again marking this by the menial nature of the Lord's "sin." The narrator's apparent friendliness, Dickensian as it may sound, is a mere textual strategy by which courtesy is used to lure the reader into the game the text wants him to play.

Like Aubrey Beardsley, Beerbohm writes himself into the text, but undermines his persona by irony, and by giving the narrator's voice the attributes of fiction. Despite their very personal styles and their assertiveness, both Beardsley and Beerbohm clearly signal they cannot and should not be taken seriously, and that their position as authors is at most a textual pose.

A similar tendency to weaken authorial position pervades the more experimental works of the 1890s: Henry James pleads for objective fiction from which the author has been fully effaced; Joseph Conrad relativizes the truth value of his core narrative by introducing frames and fallible character-narrators such as

Marlow. The Gothic fiction of the 1890s does the same, making use of "found" manuscripts, collating parts written in different genres by different characters (their letters, diaries, confessions), or resorting to "hearsay" as the author claims to have learned the story from a direct participant or witness. Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau* is preceded by the introduction written in the first person, in which a nephew of the protagonist claims to have found Prendick's story as a manuscript, and expresses his doubts as to its truthfulness. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* begins as a detached third person narrative with no authorial intrusions, and ends with two first person confessions, one by Dr Lanyon and one by Jekyll himself, unmediated by any narrator. Stoker's *Dracula* collates several characters' diaries, letters, and newspaper cuts, unmediated by any authorial presence, and introduced only by the chapter titles.

This weakening of the authorial position can thus be linked to the weakening in the traditional mechanisms of mimesis and in the Victorian assumptions of a truth that lies behind the text. As Barthes (1967) says when he announces *The Death of the Author*, "to write can no longer designate an operation of recording, of observing, of representing, of 'painting' (as the Classic writers put it)," and simultaneously "Once the Author is gone, the claim to 'decipher' a text becomes quite useless." Barthes sees this weakening in the position of the author as inextricably linked to the fact that "true locus of writing is reading," and suggests that "the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author."

It is my argument therefore not that the author died in the 1890s - with all their experimentations, the 1890s are not yet postmodern - but that he/she took an important step in that direction, with the questioning of Victorian textual protocols involving a questioning of authorial roles inextricably linked to the question of what, and if the literary text actually means.

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The "Pearl Effect": Familial Taboos of the South in E. A. Poe, E. Glasgow, P. Taylor and W. Faulkner

As we read in Williamson's biography of Faulkner (1993: 387), ironically as this may sound, the phenomenon of incest in the South should be linked to Southern gentlemen's shyness with women other than their mothers, sisters or first cousins. The turn of the century chronicles of the South show that as far as crime rate in the region was concerned at the time, it was only the number of cases connected with incest that were constantly on the rise - although incest was then solely defined as a sexual relationship with a young girl closely related to her oppressor, and not a relationship between adults who would enter into a seemingly "innocent" marriage despite close kinship (Williamson 1993: 99). Moreover, it was almost a fashion in the nineteenth-century South to marry within pairs of brothers and sisters who were close friends, which led to all manner of irregularities concerning the children, especially upon the death of one of the spouses and the remarriage of the other (Williamson 1993: 388).

Further in his book, Williamson (1993: 401-2) defines what he calls the "pearl effect" as "the capacity of the Southern community for not seeing" what is perfectly visible otherwise, i.e. the truth about their own guilt, and taking appearances and wishful thinking for reality instead. In the South, as in an oyster's shell, a grain of sand quickly ceases to be an irritant, and, lacquered over, creates a perfectly smooth surface of a pearl, which looks harmonious and beautiful to the outer world. Refusing to accept the truth about the past of their region, white Southerners become guilty of collective amnesia. By closing their eyes to the white abuse of familial relations in both the African American and the white contexts, they pretend that the problem does not exist, and thus perpetuate the "pearl effect."

This collective amnesia of the South finds its literary manifestation in the recurrence in Southern American literature of the brother-and-sister theme invariably related to the motif of physical annihilation of one or the other, or one by the other (e.g. murder in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," euthanasia in Glasgow's "Jordan's End," fratricide in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, suicide

in his *The Sound and the Fury),* as ways of eliminating the irritant and erasing undesirable memory in order to restore the pearl's smooth surface.

In his famous Gothic tale "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1840), Poe - himself a Southerner and a believer in vagueness as a mark of a story's greatness - exploits the brother-and-sister motif, with all its ambiguities, using his literary method of an aesthetic effect for the purpose, thus altogether escaping the issue of the moral evaluation of the phenomena he describes, and therefore maintaining the "pearl effect."

The resultant moral incapacitation of an outsider in Poe's story - accomplished through the aesthetization of the collective memory of the South about incest - finds its manifestation in the mysteriousness, isolation and decadence of the Usher family, hermetically enclosed in the tale's fictional world. What contributes to their state of alienation, paradoxically, is the presence in the story of the narrator, who, despite his outsidedness, is in reality Roderick's former schoolmate and as such a safeguard of the "pearl effect" in the Usher family, which "had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch" as "the entire family lay in the direct line of descent" (Poe 1955: 129).

Succumbing to the pervasive influence of the house (and the family), the narrator is unable to perceive them from the position of an outsider. As a result, he is not only unaware of his own part in Lady Madeleine's death but even incapable of recognizing the act as crime, the fact which likewise escapes the attention of the reader, who, just as the narrator, represents the outer world. Thus, ironically, in Poe's story an outsider helps to sanction the ambiguous status quo of the Usher family rather than unveil it, for any intrusion into the hermetic reality of the South is instantly channelled, its perpetrator assimilated to become part of the reality whose disgraceful aspects he was originally meant to expose.

The abortive attempt of the brother at annihilating his twin sister in "The Fall of the House of Usher" can be perceived as both a failure to eradicate "the family evil" (Poe 1955: 131) and to violate the collective memory of the South about the brother-and-sister relationship, which, as the story shows by Madeleine breaking free from her live entombment to destroy her brother and the house, can be erased at no small costs. The history of the South is not a clean slate to be filled in anew: its familial taboos lie dormant in it like the remnants of the house of Usher at the bottom of the tarn.

An imitator of Poe's Gothic tales almost a century later, Ellen Glasgow, leaves little room for speculation in her story of young Alan's mysterious illness in "Jordan's End" (1923). Her technique of Chinese boxes in introducing the

taboo theme of incest anticipates some grim family secret, guarding it jealously whenever the truth about the South is in danger of being exposed. Through this technique, the narrator - a doctor, who, as in Poe, is an outsider, becomes as if twice removed from the secret: by being called to Alan in replacement of the actual family doctor, and by being directed to the house through the agency of two dwarfed and hunched mulattoes, straight from the racial theories of the age, also twice removed from the family as their servants and racial others. Hence, Glasgow's Chinese boxes in "Jordan's End," just as Poe's aesthetization in "The Fall of the House of Usher," function as safeguards of the familial taboos of the South and a manifestation of its collective amnesia in perpetuating the "pearl effect."

As it appears upon a closer examination of Glasgow's story, the author's technique does not so much bar access to the secret of the Jordans' hereditary disease - now affecting both the male and the female lines, excepting Alan's young wife, Judith, as the first one to have come from outside of the family - as to the missing element of this and many other Southern puzzles - the brother-and-sister relationship, seemingly absent from the story other than through implication, in the presence in the house of three aunts, whose husbands are already confined to mental institutions. The missing link, however, appears with a little piece of pink baby garment crocheted by the three women in the family which already has a nine-year-old brother of the little sister-to-come.

The question is how the aunts, already affected by the family disease themselves, know what colour the baby's garment should be if we do not even know *that,* or *if,* Judith is pregnant-unless they are indeed the Fates, as Glasgow refers to them symbolically, perpetuating the collective guilt of the South, while Judith and the narrator, albeit both outsiders to the family, although not to the South, are thus bound to secure the "pearl effect," this unique ability of the South to absorb the inconvenient witnesses of the truth about itself in order to maintain the impeccable image of its own harmony.

What strikes one about Judith and the doctor is their refusal to feel guilty about their involvement in Alan's unexpected death (hers through mercy killing and his through the prescription). What is more, Judith is ready to "assist" her little son, as she did his father, when "the time comes" (Glasgow 1966: 203), as she confesses to the doctor with remarkable, if not callous, composure. Her dream-like imperturbability over the matter of her husband's sudden death matches the doctor's inability to face the inconvenient reality, both evocative of Poe's aesthetization of the collective guilt of the South:

> I had never seen a creature who appeared so withdrawn, so detached, from all human associations ... Wrapped in that silence as in a cloak, she walked across the windrifts of leaves ... Her step was so slow, so unhurried, that I remember thinking she moved like one who had all eternity before her. (Glasgow 1966: 214)

> [...] I knew that the question on my lips would never be uttered. I should always remain ignorant of the truth. The thing I feared most, standing there alone with her, was that some accident might solve the mystery before I could escape.
>
> (Glasgow 1966: 216)

Oddly enough, it is not the truth about the euthanasia that the doctor dreads but its disclosure, just as it is not the moral dimension of incest in her family that bothers Judith but its sheer physical aspect in the form of the hereditary disease - both attitudes targeted at preserving the "pearl effect."

The mechanism of the collective amnesia of the South and its final exposition is best illustrated by a contemporary short story of Peter Taylor, titled "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time" (1959), where the truth about the South is exploded by an outsider in an attempt at counteracting the "pearl effect." The role of the outsider in the story is performed by Tom Bascombs, Ned Meriwether's close friend and a supplier of paper flowers for very mysterious and very suggestive teenage brother-and-sister balls organized annually by the Dorsets, an elderly brother-and-sister couple in a small Southern town of West Vesey. At Ned's instigation, Tom, the non-brother, plays a trick on the hosts by replacing Ned at his sister Emily's side on one of those occasions.

The origin of the idea has nothing to do with its consequences and is passed over in silence in the story, except one seemingly insignificant comment provided by Ned and Emily's elder and a former participant in a Dorset ball, who thus explains the reason why Emily and Ned quarrelled over which one of them knew Tom "first" and "better": "We could have told him what it was, 1 think. But we didn't. It would have been too hard to say to him that at one time or another all of us in West Vesey had had our Tom Bascombs" (Taylor 1977: 618). These puzzling words become clear only in the context of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* The "Tom Bascombs" are Charles Bons, i.e. Southern brothers' closest friends, to whom the former are prepared to give their sisters away in marriage without misgivings about the latter "touching] parts of [their] sister[s'] bod[ies] that [they] will never see and touch," (Faulkner 1972: 328), as Henry Sutpen confides in his half-brother Charles Bon before finding out that they are related or that Bon has some black blood.

The above interpretation is confirmed by Ned's reaction to seeing his sister being kissed by Tom at a ball meant exclusively for brothers-and-sisters, a gesture received with approval by the Dorsets and the other brother-and-sister couples unaware of Tom's identity. Appalled by the sight, Ned exclaims: '"Don't you *know?*' he wailed, as if in great physical pain. 'Can't you *tell?* Can't you see who they *are?* They're *brother* and *sister'.'"* (Taylor 1977: 625) The subtle irony of that scene suggests that what Ned - the brother - is in fact shocked by is that it is Tom - the non-brother - rather than himself that is kissing his sister, i.e. they are kissing *although* they *are not* siblings rather than *because* they *are.* Ned's reaction makes him similar to other Southern gentlemen - Henry Sutpen from *Absalom, Absalom!* and Quentin from *The Sound and the Fury* - in that he relegates the truth about himself and his incestuous desire for his sister into the unconscious, thus inscribing himself into the collective amnesia of the South.

In Taylor's story, exposed by a non-brother, the myth of the South is exploded on the borderline between reality and illusion, aestheticism and morality, art and sensuality. The suggestive ambiguity of the decorations accompanying the Dorset balls - subtly fragrant flowers and intimately lit sensuous paintings of French and Italian masters, remain in keeping with the "doing pretty" manner and the "pearl effect" mentality of the South, which thus absorbs the inconvenient truths unto itself. In Faulkner, multiple narrators striving in vain to reconstruct a single Southern story, the author's oxymoronic imagination in asserting presence by absence as well as his method of denegation (Pitavy 1989: 45) can be perceived as manifestations of and a counteraction against the "pearl effect," with a view to exposing the disconcerting truth about two major taboos of his region, incest and miscegenation.

Hidden under the guise of obsession over his imagined incest with his sister Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury,* lies Quentin's obsessive fear of miscegenation and his morbid doubts as to his idiot brother Benjy's, and thus also his own, racial identity: "I was not who was not was not who. [...] Benjamin the child of. How he used to sit before that mirror [...] Benjamin the child of mine old age held hostage into Egypt. O Benjamin. [...] They come into white people's lives like that in sudden sharp black tricles that isolate white facts" (Faulkner 1954: 211). *Absalom, Absalom!,* seemingly concerned with the forbidden fruit of incest as applied to half-siblings (Judith and Bon), especially if one of them is a half-breed, rather than to a full-blooded brother-and-sister relationship (Judith and Henry), in fact features an act of fratricide triggered by the latter.

Hence in *The Sound and the Fury* Quentin commits suicide not only on account of Caddy's lost virginity, or his own obsession with time, but also because of his morbid preoccupation with the shadow of his own racially suspect self, so as to protect his sister from his own shadowy alter ego, as suggested by Irwin (1986: 34) in "Doubling and Incest," while in *Absalom, Absalom!* Henry kills his half-brother to prevent miscegenation as well as incest that he cannot himself partake of. The seemingly absurd question that forces itself upon the reader at this point is whether in the South incest has perhaps been perceived as a preventive of miscegenation.

The parallel drawn in *Absalom, Absalom',* between the two half-brothers, Henry and Bon, on the one hand, and the two narrators trying to reconstruct their story, Quentin and his Canadian Harvard roommate, Shreve, on the other hand, puts Shreve and Quentin in an apparently impossible position of half-brothers, one of them a half-breed, both tied to each other, like Henry and Bon, as Faulkner says, with an umbilical cord. Since Shreve's racial and national identity seems unquestionable, of the two of them it is Quentin that emerges as a half-breed. The missing element of this double brotherly puzzle in the latter case, though, is the sister, whose existence Quentin never admits to Shreve in *Absalom, Absalom!* - until we meet Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury.* By analogy with the Henry-Judith-Bon trio then, Quentin's silence about Caddy, paradoxically, establishes him and Shreve as rivals.

The clue to Shreve's position in the Quentin-Caddy-Shreve trio can be found in *The Sound and the Fury* in the seemingly inconspicuous character of Versh (the anagram of Shreve), Dilsey's black (or mulatto?) son, whom she assures at one point that he and his brothers have "jes es much Compson devilment" (Faulkner 1954: 344) in them as does Jason, Quentin and Caddy's greedy brother, suggesting thereby the existence under the Compson roof of a shadow family, a common enough phenomenon in the South. Ironically, Versh features as Quentin's rival in both incest and miscegenation in an episode from their childhood, when, appalled by his daring gesture, Quentin prevents him from helping Caddy take off her dress when she muddies her drawers.

This interpretation would help to account for two inconspicuous but puzzling passages in *The Sound and the Fury*, which have not received enough critical attention (cf. Branny 1997: 153-4). The first is a folk story about the multiplying *"bluegum"* children (mulattoes?) who one day ate Quentin's Grandfather, in which Versh addresses Benjy, referring to his suspect identity, which Quentin is also troubled by in the already cited passage:

> They are making a bluegum out of you. Mammy say in old time your grandpa changed nigger's name, and he turn preacher, and when they look at him, he bluegum too. Didn't use to be bluegum, neither. And when family woman look him in the eye in the full of the moon, chile bom bluegum. And one evening, when they was about a dozen them bluegum chillen running round the place, he never come home. Possum hunters found him in the woods, et clean. And you know who et him. Them blegum chillen did. (Faulkner 1954: 84-85)

The passage is reminiscent of the famous Shreve prophecy at the end of *Absalom, Absalom!*, whereby the "*bluegum chillerT* become Bond Jim[s] (note the homophone with Benjy), who, as Shreve asserts, will one day "conquer the western hemisphere. [...] and will bleach out like rabbits and the birds [...] so in a few thousand years" he himself "will also have sprung from the loins of African kings" (Faulkner 1972: 378), the statement which puts Shreve in the seemingly impossible position of a half-breed.

The other puzzling passage, this time from *Absalom, Absalom!*, features Quentin and Shreve, "*both being the father*''" (Faulkner 1972: 261-62), a seemingly impossible option, thus appropriately marked by numerous maybe's in Faulkner's text, unless Shreve is indeed Versh, and thus the case of the Southern "pearl effect" in the making:

> Maybe we are both Father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool.... Yes, we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father. (Faulkner 1972: 261-2)

Dilsey's apocalyptic testimony about seeing "de beginnin, en now... de endin'' (Faulkner 1954: 371) of the Compson family, her remark about her own children's "Compson devilment," Versh's hints about Benjy being *"a bluegum"* child as well as Quentin's obsession with the idea of a shadow, and his musing about his own and Benjy's identity in front of a mirror, coupled with numerous other hints in the novel, confirm the existence of an extensive shadow family in the Compson yard, which most possibly includes the two seemingly white brothers - Benjy and Quentin, although the characteristic amnesia of the South rules out the possibility of admitting any such phenomenon (cf. Branny 2007: 59-66 and 1997: 142-57).

Just as in his narrative section Benjy is constantly reported to be followed by the shadow of Versh and the other Gibson brothers - so in his obsession

with Caddy and the shadow Quentin in his section is constantly accompanied by the shadow of Shreve: just before his suicide he puts a letter to Shreve in his pocket, brushes his teeth with Shreve's toothpaste, borrows a brush from him, with which he cleans his hat before leaving, and finally, and very significantly, puts his Grandfather's watch, the one he got from his father, a mark of incest and miscegenation in the Compson household, into Shreve's drawer.

Hence Shreve and Versh seem to function in *The Sound and the Fury* as "obverse reflection[s]" (Faulkner 1954: 106) of each other - and indeed literally so if one considers the name reversal - just as all blacks are of the whites in the South, as Quentin claims at the end of the novel. If Versh is indeed Quentin's mulatto half-brother, and Shreve is Versh's negative, then, in the Quentin-Caddy-Shreve trio it would have to be Quentin whose racial identity would be questionable - "both he and Shreve the father" - although Shreve is not a Compson, unless he is indeed Versh, and hence a Gibson, a mirror image, a shadow of the Compsons, charmed by the Southern "pearl effect," Southern manner of "doing pretty," into his oxymoronic negative - a *white non-Amercan, non-Southerner, non-Compson*, in confirmation of the phenomenon discussed in this paper.

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Spooky Houses in Western Fiction: From Poe's House of Usher to Danielewski's *House of Leaves*

Houses have played an important (thematic and/or allegorical) role in Western fiction during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - right up to the present day. In Jungian terms the house can be viewed as an architectural model of the self (such as he formulates it in his *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, 1927, i.e. in the essay "Mind and the Earth"):

> we have [...] to describe and to explain a building the upper storey of which was erected in the nineteenth century; the ground-floor dates from the sixteenth century, and a careful examination of the masonry discloses the fact that it was reconstructed from a dwelling-tower of the eleventh century. In the cellar we discover Roman foundation walls, and under the cellar a filled-in cave, in the floor of which stone tools are found, and remains of glacial fauna in the layers below. That would be a sort of picture of our mental structure. (Jung 1928: 118-19)

In the present paper I shall focus primarily on a number of haunted houses in Western fiction - from the Gothic mansion in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) and the derelict priory in H. P. Lovecraft's "The Rats in the Walls" (1923, 1924) to more recent thematic examples like the monstrous, scary and/or oversized/hyperbolic buildings in novels such as Stacey Levine's *Dra-* (1997) or Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000, 2001). And quite a few of these houses furthermore hover between the realm of allegory (like the Norwegian writer Tarjei Vesaas' *The House in the Dark*, 1945, 1976) and the realm of *poésie pure* (like William Goyen's *The House of Breath*, 1949).

According to Gaston Bachelard, commenting on architectural spaces and their symbolic connotations in *The Poetics of Space* (1958, 1964, 1994), the heights and the depths are certainly imbued with quite explicit connotations, i.e. to the extent that "the rationality of the roof' is opposed to "the irrationality of the cellar" and to the extent that "[i]n the attic, the day's experiences can always efface the fears of the night. In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing

on the dark walls" (Bachelard 1994: 18-19).[1] Furthermore, the cellar "is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths" (Bachelard 1994: 18).[2]

Whereas Bachelard focuses primarily on the house as a sheltered space - or as a "major zone of protection" (Bachelard 1994: 31)[3] - Sigmund Freud tends to be thematically preoccupied with the *spooky* or *uncanny* qualities of the house, which he exemplifies in his seminal essay "The Uncanny" ("Das Unheimliche" 1919). In his initial discussion of the etymology of the German word *unheimlich* Freud thus notices that "*heimlich* [i.e. homely or cosy] is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich* [i.e. uncanny]. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a subspecies of *heimlich* [which incidentally also means *secret]"* (Freud 1985: 347).[4] In this context we must therefore bear in mind that home and hearth can easily become uncanny or haunted places. Whereas the Victorian domicile is usually regarded as the *castle* of the bourgeois patriarch (according to the formula: "My home is my castle") - and this homestead is furthermore inhabited by the "angel in the house" (in Coventry Patmore's phrase), i.e. by a highly idealized and spiritualized housewife and mother - the aforementioned Freudian reflections implicitly undermine the ideological underpinnings of such a self-complacent set-up (as well as the character armour

[1] "on peut opposer la rationalité du toit à l'irrationalité de la cave" (Bachelard 1998: 35) and "Au grenier, l'expérience du jour peut toujours effacer les peurs de la nuit. A la cave les ténèbres demeurent jour et nuit. Même avec le bougeoir à la main, l'homme à la cave voit danser les ombres sur la noire muraille" (Bachelard 1998: 36).

[2] "mais [la cave] est d'abord l'être obscur de la maison, l'être qui participe aux puissances souterraines. En y rêvant, on s'accorde à l'irrationalité des profondeurs" (Bachelard 1998: 35). As has been pointed out by feminist critics, the Bachelardian model of the psyche may reflect what looks (primarily) like a patriarchal outlook, for of course, *madwomen in the attic (pace* Gilbert and Gubar and others) appear to disprove the very notion of the "rationality of the roof;" in Leonora Carrington's short story "The Sisters" (1939, 1942) Drusille's bird-like and vampyristic sister Juniper is thus precisely placed in the attic: "Perched on a rod near the ceiling, an extraordinay creature looked at the light with blinded eyes. Her body was white and naked, feathers grew from her shoulders and round her breasts. Her white arms were neither wings nor arms. A mass of white hair fell around her face, whose flesh was like marble" (Leonora Carrington: *The Seventh Horse and Other Tales*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988, p. 44).

[3] Bachelard refers to the house in Henri Bachelin's *Le serviteur* as "une zone de protection majeure" (Bachelard 1998: 45).

[4] "Also heimlich ist ein Wort, das seine Bedeutung nach einer Ambivalenz entwickelt, bis es endlich mit seinem Gegensatz unheimlich zusammenfàllt. Unheimlich ist irgendwie eine Art von heimlich" (Freud 1982: 250).

of the master of the house). In "The Uncanny" Freud also takes up some aspects of the way(s) in which houses are portrayed in a literary context, and in this connection he thematizes the architectural uncanny in the following passage:

> In the middle of the isolation of war-time a number of the English *Strand Magazine* fell into my hands; and, among other somewhat redundant matter, I read a story about a young married couple who move into a furnished house in which there is a curiously shaped table with carvings of crocodiles on it. Towards evening an intolerable and very specific smell begins to pervade the house; they stumble over something in the dark; they seem to see a vague form gliding over the stairs - in short, we are given to understand that the presence of the table causes ghostly crocodiles to haunt the place, or that the wooden monsters come to life in the dark, or something of the sort. It was a naive enough story, but the uncanny feeling it produced was quite remarkable. (Freud 1985: 367)[5]

Freud is not very accurate with regard to his literary source (he does not indicate what issue of the *Strand Magazine* he had found his story in); but later scholars have found out that the story in question was L. G. Moberly's "Inexplicable" published in volume 54 of *Strand Magazine* in 1917. According to Nicholas Royle (2003: 141, note 5), "Lucy Gertrude Moberly was an author of many novels, published in the early decades of the twentieth century; largely forgotten now, they were regularly reviewed, for example, in the *Times Literary Supplement."* Freud is also somewhat inaccurate when he characterizes the domicile of the young couple in "Inexplicable" as a "furnished house." Royle points out that:

> In fact, it is a significant and emphatic point in the story that the house is very much a house (a property so substantial, indeed, that it transpires to have its own "cottage at the end of the garden" (p. 579)), and that it is *not* furnished: the mystery is why the owner or owners, or previous tenant or tenants, have left the table behind. In other words, whether through misremembering or misrepresentation, it is more

[5] "Mitten in der Absperrung des Weltkrieges kam eine Nummer des englischen Magazins *Strand* in meine Hände, in der ich unter anderen ziemlich überflüssigen Produktonen eine Erzählung las, wie ein junges Paar eine möblierte Wohnung bezieht, in der sich ein seltsam geformter Tisch mit holzgeschnitzten Krokodilen befindet. Gegen Abend pflegt sich dann ein unerträglicher, charakteristischer Gestank in der Wohnung zu verbreiten, man stolpert im Dunkeln über etwas, man glaubt zu sehen, wie etwas Undefinierbares über die Treppe huscht, kurz, man soll erraten, dass infolge der Anwesenheit dieses Tisches gespenstige Krokodile im Hause spuken oder dass die hölzernen Scheusale im Dunkeln Leben bekommen oder etwas Ähnliches. Es war eine recht einfaltige Geschichte, aber ihre unheimliche Wirkung verspürte man als ganz hervorragend" (Freud 1982:267).

> specifically the case of a "haunted house" *("ein Haus in dem es spukt* [...]") than Freud's summary might seem to suggest. (Royle 2003: 135)[6]

The uncanny - or magical - object, i.e. the carved table, thus becomes the thematic centre of the plot; and the rest of the furniture becomes literally inessential, insofar as the table with the spooky crocodiles takes up all the narrative space, as it were. The "bestial" underpinnings of civilized life in middle-class England are thus explicitly thematized.

The Decline and Fall of the Gothic Manor-House from Edgar Allan Poe to H. P. Lovecraft

In *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (1928,1983) the English art historian Kenneth Clark comments on the widespread rehabilitation of so-called "Gothic" elements in eighteenth-century architecture and the way(s) in which ruins were cultivated by the nobility and the landed gentry during the same period; as a matter of fact, sham ruins were actually built [as ruins] by enterprising architects in eighteenth-century England, and according to Kenneth Clark (1983: 48-49),

> [i]t would be interesting to know when the first Gothic ruins were built. [Horace] Walpole mentions one by Gibbs, which seems more improbable; but we know that Kent used the style, and I am inclined to make him responsible, for it was he who rebelled against the formal garden and brought into fashion romantic irregularities [... However,] the earliest [ruin] for which we have a date was built in 1746. It was the work of Sanderson Miller, an amateur architect of Radway, Warwickshire, and was built in his grounds at Edgehill [...] For all their forlorn absurdity, Miller's sham ruins show knowledge of medieaeval architecture, and at least they are of stone. His rich clients could afford this concession to realism. But the average country gentleman gratified his imagination more cheaply: his ruins were of plaster or canvas.

[6] Cf. also on Freud's reading of Moberly's story Robin Lydenberg, "Freud's Uncanny Narratives," *PMLA* 112 (October 1997): 1072-1086. As for L. G. Moberly's story cf. L. G. Moberly: "Inexplicable," illustrated by Dudley Tennant, *Strand Magazine* 54 (1917): 572-81. Cf. also *Seekers ofDreams: Masterpieces of Fantasy.* Ed. & with Notes by Douglas A. Anderson (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring Press, 2005), pp. 241-52. The story is also reprinted in *Strange Tales from the Strand.* Selected and introduced by Jack Adrian. Foreword by Julian Symons (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1992 (first published in 1991)), pp. 183-95. We notice that in this story - as in so many other classic examples of the fantastic - the everyday world and its would-be "normal" codes are in a spectacular manner undermined by "inexplicable" (allegedly supernatural) events, i.e. events that somehow disrupt the "natural" order of things.

The picturesque style exemplified by these sham ruins is omnipresent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England (and to a certain extent also in the United States); and in 1839 Edgar Allan Poe certainly alludes to this would-be Gothic tradition in "The Fall of the House of Usher." In a certain sense, it may be argued that those who built ruins had anticipated or pre-figured the eventual decline and downfall of the *ancien régime*, as it were - which is, of course, precisely the ultimate outcome of the plot in "The Fall of the House of Usher," when

> the barely-perceptible fissure" in the front wall of the manor-house in the last paragraph of the story "rapidly widened - there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind - the entire orb of the satellite [i.e. the blood-red moon] burst at once upon my sight - my brain reeled as I saw the mighty wall rushing asunder - there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of thousand waters - and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "*House of Usher*." (Poe 2000: 417)

Thus we notice how *the depths swallow up the heights* (the "tarn" swallows up the House of Usher). But this downward urge has already been foregrounded in various ways earlier in the story, e.g. when Roderick Usher (the lord of the manor-house) and his friend (the first-person narrator) bury Madeline (Roderick's apparently dead sister) "in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building" (Poe 2000:409), i.e. carrying out what amounts to a "temporary entombment" (allegedly taking into consideration the unusual character of her malady [is she *quite* dead?] and presumably also taking into consideration what amounts to a well-founded fear of grave-robbers) (Poe 2000: 409). When Roderick and his friend place Madeline's "corpse" within this "vault" deep down within the main building, her body is certainly positioned on the level of what Gaston Bachelard terms "the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces" (cf. the passage from *The Poetics of Space*, referring to the "topology" of the cellar or basement, quoted earlier in the present paper).

However this may be, the depths and their vaults are also thematized by Roderick Usher in his exertions as a painter:

> [a] small picture represented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel [cf. the vault where Madeline is buried (!)], with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of

> intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly yet inappropriate splendor. (Poe 2000: 405-6)

Darkness itself is thus suffused with a mysterious aura of its own (its luminosity or "inappropriate splendor" is certainly against nature), which in its own way also adds to the spooky character of the whole set-up. And within this setting we are not at all surprised that the borderline between life and death itself can be transgressed - which takes place, when Madeline returns from her "temporary" entombment and brings about the death of her brother as well as the final downfall of the House of Usher (when the whole building is swallowed up by the "tarn").

Edgar Allan Poe was undoubtedly the great precursor to H. P. Lovecraft (to adopt Harold Bloom's terminology). As Lovecraft (2000: 43) himself formulates it in his *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (first published in 1927):

> Truly it may be said that Poe invented the short story in its present form. His elevation of disease, perversity, and decay to the level of artistically expressible themes was likewise infinitely far-reaching in effect; for avidly seized, sponsored, and intensified by his eminent French admirer Charles Pierre Baudelaire, it became the nucleus of the principal aesthetic movements in France, thus making Poe in a sense the father of the Decadents and the Symbolists.

Lovecraft also refers to Nathaniel Hawthorne's archetypal *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and in this connection it is interesting to notice that he focuses on the metaphysics (or poetics) of the house in weird fiction: "The overshadowing malevolence of the ancient house - almost as alive as Poe's House of Usher, though in a subtler way - pervades the tale as a recurrent motif pervades an operatic tragedy" (2000: 49). In Lovecraft's own short story "The Rats in the Walls" (written in 1923, published in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in March 1924) a similar "malevolent" house (i.e. Exham Priory, rebuilt by its present owner, the first-person narrator) is placed at the centre of the plot. However this may be, it turns out that beneath the re-constructed priory there are further layers of architectural remains. A company of archaeological explorers discover downstairs

> a twilit grotto of enormous height, stretching away farther than any eye could see; a subterraneous world of limitless mystery and horrible suggestion. There were buildings and other architectural remains - in one terrified glance I saw a weird pattern of tumuli, a savage circle of monoliths, a low-domed Roman ruin, a sprawling Saxon pile, and an early English edifice of wood - but all these were

> dwarfed by the ghoulish spectacle presented by the general surface of the ground. For yards about the steps [down into this grotto] extended an insane tangle of human bones, or bones at least as human as those on the steps. (Lovecraft 2002: 105)

Here we are once more reminded of C. G. Jung's model of the human psyche in his *Contributions to Analytical Psychology'* (1927), where the chronological development of the human mind is portrayed as an instance of layering, as it were. And in the second-last paragraph of Lovecraft's story this descent into the past is signalized as a linguistic *déroute* (or a linguistic break-down), where the first-person narrator traces a trajectory through a succession of languages, comprising archaic English, Middle English, Latin, and Gaelic, back to primitive grunts or a primal scream: " 'Sblood, thou stinkard, I'll learn ye how to gust ... wolde ye swynke me thilke wys? ... *Magna Mater! Magna Mater!... Atys ... Dia ad aghaidh s adodann ... agus bas dunach ort! Dhonas s dholas ort, agus leat-sa!... Ungl... ungl... rrrlh... chchch* ..." (Lovecraft 2002: 108). According to S. T. Joshi (Lovecraft's modem editor), the Gaelic text has been borrowed by Lovecraft from Joseph Lewis French's *The Best Psychic Stories* (1920) and translated by Fiona Macleod (alias William Sharp) as follows, "God against thee and in thy face ... and may a death of woe be yours... Evil and sorrow to thee and thine" (Lovecraft 2002: 384 note 33). The Gaelic passage is thus a curse, and we notice how the declarative and/or informative aspects of language are gradually toned down, whereas interjectional and/or purely "magical" uses of language become more and more important.

Ghostly Modernities in the Allegorical and the Poetical Modes

The allegorical mode has quite often been taken up in modernist fiction - and as far as the house metaphor is concerned, we notice that its history as an allegorical topos can at least be traced back to the Middle Ages, where John Gower's House of Sleep (in his *Confessio Amantis,* ca. 1390) and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Housof Fame* (probably written between 1379 and 1380) exemplify this trend. In modernist fiction we might mention Karel Capek's *The War with the Newts* (1936) and Leonora Carrington's *The House of Fear (La Maison de la peur,* written 1937-38, published in 1938, with illustrations by Max Ernst) as twentieth-century examples of the allegorical mode.

The Norwegian writer Tarjei Vesaas (1899-1970) makes allegorical use of the house topos in *The House in the Dark (Huset i môrkret,* 1945 ; English translation in 1976) - a novel about the German occupation of Norway (1940-1945),

written during the last months of the Second World War. According to Tarjei Vesaas's English translator Elizabeth Rokkan,

> *The House in the Dark* was written in Norway during the Second World War in unusual circumstances [...] By 1945 no one doubted that the war would soon be over, but in Occupied Norway there was much uncertainty as to how it would end [...]. [According to Vesaas's wife, Haldis Moren Vesaas] [t]hat winter and spring of 1945 [Tarjei Vesaas] worked more steadily than he had ever done before, or would do later [...]. [When the manuscript was finished] [h]e made a solid zinc box for it, and buried it among the trees above the lake. Afterwards he took me [i.e. Haldis Moren Vesaas] there and showed me where he had hidden it, so that I should be able to find it again if he himself were gone when the time came to have it published. (Vesaas 1976: 7-8)

According to Elizabeth Rokkan, the novel may be characterized as "[pjart allegory, part parable," and on one level it "describes the drab lives of the inhabitants of an enormous house that has suffered a catastrophe of supernatural dimensions; on another [level] it depicts the struggle against the forces of darkness in poetic terms, combining biblical echoes with highly modem symbols" (Vesaas 1976: 9). From the very outset the "bewitched house" in question is portrayed as follows:

> Here, beneath a single, gigantic, convex roof, are collected countless rooms and corridors and narrow passages, cut off from the rest of the world by dense, oppressive darkness. There are open courtyards inside this extensive house, but the darkness lies over it all like a crushing weight. If anyone were foolish enough to climb up on to the roof in an attempt to see something, he would simply feel as if his eyes had been tom out. He would come down again quickly and crawl away home. (Vesaas 1976: 11)[7]

Arrows point in the direction of the centre of this enormous building - an obvious allusion to the totalitarian character (or aura) of this regime. What goes on in a totalitarian society can be characterized as (literally) unidirectional (or unidimensional). But at the same time the Resistance attempts to undermine the power of the centre by digging tunnels right up to the very centre ("The hidden

[7] Referring to "eit forgjort hus": "Her er det samla, under eit einaste bylgjande kjempe-tak, tallause rom og gangar og smog - og skild frå all verda med eit tett, tungt morker. Her er opne gàrdsrom inni dette vide huset, men morkret ligg over alt som ei krasande vekt. Om noken i orske kleiv opp pâ taket for â fà eit glimt av eitkvart, sâ ville det berre kjennast som augo var stungne ut. Han ville koma fort ned att og krabbe inn til seg sjolv" (Vesaas 1945: 7).

tunnelling goes right up to the hidden centre," Vesaas 1976: 31).[8] Occasionally an uncanny van picks up some of these freedom fighters (sometimes they are killed afterwards, sometimes they are incarcerated). At the end of the novel, one of the resistance fighters (Peter) realizes that "[h]is way ends here" (i.e. in front of a wall) - even if "events are [by now] moving in favour of the living" (and the occupation army is going to give up its stronghold very soon) (Vessas 1976: 282).[9]

According to Tzvetan Todorov in his famous study *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973, an English translation of his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, 1970), allegory is more or less diametrically opposed to poetry (and both are opposed to the fantastic proper). However, it may nevertheless be argued that allegory - in some respects - also bears a certain resemblance to the fantastic *(The House in the Dark*, with its Kafkaesque underpinnings, could also be characterized as a fantastic novel).[10] However this may be, a novel like William Goyen's *House of Breath* (1949) to a certain extent likewise belongs to two different (generic or modal) fields, i.e. it is both a fantastic narrative (focusing on the dream of flying) and an example of*poésie pure.* Eve La Salle Caram (2004: 36) in her article "From the Earth Itself: The Yearning Voices of *The House of Breath"* comments on the elemental lore of *The House of Breath*, ending up with a reference to "the yearning lyricism that seems to come out of the earth itself in all the voices." What she focuses on in the passage just quoted is the multivocal or polyphonic set-up of the novel as such *(pace* Mikhail Bakhtin).

But of course, as the very title of the novel indicates, air and earth appear to be competing forces within the poetical universe of the novel. We may likewise notice a subtle dialectic between the heights and the depths in this novel, where David Cowart (1997: 9) has noticed a remarkable downward urge (associated with the house topos, cf. Bachelard's reflections quoted earlier), insofar as "the archetypal descent into the depths - whether of well, river, or cellar, whether of self or time - is something not unique to the sensitive narrator [i.e. Boy]. Granny Ganchion [the grandmother] descends into her cellar to commune with Old Fuzz the worm."

[8] "Like fram til den loynde midten gär den laynde boringa" (Vessas 1945: 31).

[9] "Vegen hans vil ende *her."* But "[o]ver einstad brest det i det ladde huset. Men gär mot det levande" (Vesaas 1945: 339).

[10] On the relationship between these two genres or modes see also Peter Cersowsky, "Allegory and the Fantastic in Literature: Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death' and Alfred Kubin's 'The Other Side,'" *Sprachkunst. Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft,* Vol. 13. 1. Halbband (1982): 141-42.

Postmodernism and Its Discontents: From Stacey Levine's *Dra-* (1997) to Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000, 2001)

The American critic Matthew Stadler (1997: 1) notices in his review in *The Stranger* (March 9, 1997) that in Stacey Levine's Kafkaesque novel *Dra-* (1997) "the nondescript heroine of this grim, hilarious fiction, might have fallen through the same hole as Lewis Carroll's Alice, only now, 130 years later, there ['s no time for frivolity, just the pressing need to get a job." However, the female applicant (Dra-) very soon loses her way inside the monstrous, oversized building, where the Employment Office is situated, for its architectural ground plan appears to be almost impossible to chart. When Dra- at a certain point in the development of the plot has got access to the roof of the building (we may bear in mind that this turned out to be *impossible* for those who frequented Tarjei Vesaas's *House in the Dark),* even this place turns out to be infinitely more convoluted and impossible to survey than one should have thought:

> The dark, miles-long roof was covered by another roof and so on, the top roof being unreachable in all ways; and as she walked towards the elevators, she passed a small niche that contained an open-walled guard station, though it did not contain a guard, but instead two figures struggling unpleasantly beneath a cloak, and she turned away. (Levine 1997: 60)

The bureaucratic weightiness (and density) of the whole place is obvious:

> Despite the silence of these halls, there were, she knew, thousands upon thousands of employees everywhere, not visible now, but hard at work instead, gathered in small stifled work centers, basements, and sub-basements; night stations, corridors, and portable and permanent work areas; work vaults, niches for special projects, and training hutches connected by hallways just inches across that stuttered in one direction then another before widening into empty classrooms lined by shelves full of sheets and old surgical equipment. (Levine 1997: 13-14)

The convoluted spaces and claustrophobic atmosphere of this building, with its "hallways just inches across that stuttered in one direction then another," remind us of classic Gothic scenarios with their winding, subterranean corridors and secret passages, their hidden vaults and prison-cells placed down below (we are also reminded of Kafka's *The Castle*, 1924, and Borgesian narratives like "The Library of Babel," 1941).

We notice the intertextual set-up of *Dra-;* in accordance with the poeto-logical premises of postmodernist fiction it always refers to other texts. This is

stressed in an even more spectacular manner in one of the most recent examples of the playful use of the house topos, namely Mark Z. Danielewski's highly experimental *portmanteau* novel *House of Leaves* (2000, 2001). In this novel the house literally spreads out and takes up all available space (and a little more than that): the house in question continually expands, attempting to swallow up lodgers and visitors alike in the process. The complicated narrative structure of the text (an ingenious Chinese box system) presents us with a whole series of (heavily loaded) meta-textual or meta-fictional appendixes (offshoots from the main narrative, if there actually *is* such a fictional core). According to Will Slocombe, the text itself is not only indebted to the American Gothic tradition, but also to Derridean reading strategies, and

> [t]his reading method can entail anything that leads to a deferment, whether mirrors, ghosts, echoes, supplements and annotations, or absences [... and] [w]hile *House of Leaves* is full of such tropes, and could thus be read as a deconstructive text, it is important to realize that while *House of Leaves* uses deconstructive strategy, its primary aim is to undo the violent hierarchy of its own existence. The House, both as house and text, seeks to unwrite its own creation, and this reflexive destruction of its own axioms demonstrates an important aspect of nihilism and the primary difference between deconstruction and nihilism. (Slocombe 2005: 92)

The murderous house in *House of Leaves* certainly reminds us of similar houses in Poe and Lovecraft (the House of Usher, the priory in "The Rats in the Walls," etc.). According to Will Slocombe (2005: 104), "this nihilistic space functions in the manner akin to a black hole, seeking to absorb all traces of [Heideggerian] Being with which it is presented [...] As the nihilistic space of the House expands, it kills [the protagonist] Navidson's brother, Tom [...] 'literally' swallowing him."[11]

Whatever is on the agenda here, the Lovecraftian characteristics of the House are pretty obvious, and this becomes quite clear when the explorer/filmmaker Navidson appears to be locked up within this claustrophobic structure for good:

> As he sits on the edge, he beholds a strange and very disconcerting sight. No more than twenty feet below is the surface of an incredibly clear liquid. Navidson

[11] According to N. Katherine Hayes (2004: 779), the palimpsestic characteristics of *House of Leaves* are obvious: "Rather than trying to penetrate cultural constructions to reach an original object of inquiry, *House of Leaves* uses the very multilayered inscriptions that create it as a physical artifact to imagine the subject as a palimpsest, emerging not behind but through the inscriptions that bring the book into being."

> presumes it is water though he senses it is somewhat more viscous. By some peculiar quality intrinsic to itself, this liquid does not impede but actually clarifies the impossible vision of what lies beneath: a long shaft descending for miles ultimately opening up into a black bottomless pit which instantly fills Navidson with an almost crippling sense of dread. (Danielewski 2001: 398)[12]

Kristevan abjection (usually associated with the secretions of the human body) is here combined with a more classic *vertige de I 'abime* - and apart from obvious allusions to Poesque and Lovecraftian chasms we are reminded of Heidegger's well-known comment upon such an abysmal ontology in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953, 1959): "Man embarks on the groundless deep, forsaking the solid land. He sets sail not upon bright, smooth waters, but amid the storms of winter" (Heidegger 1959: 153). Danielewski's characters ultimately find it extremely difficult to come to terms with this House of Fear.

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[12] Actually, this subterranean landscape has been prefigured more than a century earlier in one of Roderick Usher's paintings: "A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor" (Poe 2000: 405-6).

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Myth and Reality: Points of Departure in American Literature and Culture in the Nineteenth Century

In Chapter 21, "A Hard Case," of Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man,* there is a dialogue between the Missourian and the herb-doctor, who tries to sell his quack medicines on a Mississippi steamboat. Declaring his lack of confidence in everything from herbal remedies to boys and men working his land, the Missourian states that he is planning to dispense with human labour because he has decided to "get me some kind of machine to do the sort of work which boys are supposed to do" (Melville 1989: 93). A discussion on distrust follows, which, in turn, leads to an argument in which the concepts of nature and scientific progress clash. The herb-doctor rounds on the Missourian:

> "[...] Now, can you, who suspect nature, deny, that this same nature not only brought you into being, but has faithfully nursed you to your present vigorous and independent condition? Is it not to nature that you are indebted for that robustness of mind which you so unhandsomely use to her scandal? Pray, is it not to nature that you owe the very eyes by which you criticise her?"
> "No! for the privilege of vision I am indebted to an occulist, who in my tenth year operated upon me in Philadelphia. Nature made me blind and would have kept me so. My occulist counterplotted her." (Melville 1989: 93-94)

This dialogue encapsulated the debate that Americans were conducting from quite early on in the nineteenth century concerning the effects of technology and scientific progress on human beings, and, by extension, on the natural landscape. That natural defects could be counterbalanced by man-made intervention sums up the way people thought and wrote about the rise of mechanisation in American society and its impact on a pastoral way of life. The Missourian can see because of an operation; he can also dream of doing away with human beings by introducing machines on to his land.

It is interesting that Henry Adams (1973: 345), in his *Education of Henry Adams,* states that "the whole mechanical consolidation of force ruthlessly stamped out the life of the class into which Adams was bom," and, of course,

he was of Boston Brahmin stock. As with all strata of society, mechanisation was to bring profound changes. Adams also points to the upheaval wrought by rapid industrialisation, especially after the Civil War, and the spread of urbanisation that accompanied it.

Herman Melville, too, looked at the results of such means of production on the lives of those who went into the factories and tended machines. In the second part of his story "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1855), Melville describes the pale-faced factory girls, with eyes "supernatural with unrelated misery," who have become mere adjuncts to the machine that can produce foolscap paper in nine minutes. The narrator asks if the "great machine" ever gets jammed and is informed that "machinery makes it go just *so;* just that way, and at the very pace you there plainly see it go" (Melville 2007: 84). The machine is infallible. It cannot jam; it just goes reliably on and on. Looking round him, the narrator concludes that the female factory workers, all single, because more reliable than married women, are confined to hell - Tartarus - and fear grips him:

> Something of awe now stole over me, as I gazed upon this flexible iron animal. Always, more or less, machinery of this ponderous, elaborate sort strikes, in some moods, strange dread into the human heart, as some living, panting Behemoth might. But what made the thing I saw so specially terrible to me was the metallic necessity which governed it. [...] Before my eyes there, passing in slow procession along the wheeling cylinders, I seemed to see, glued to the pallid incipience of the pulp, the yet more pallid faces of all the pallid girls I had eyed that heavy day. (Melville 2007: 84)

This perspective on factories and the regimes they imposed on the hands who worked in them is well-brought-out by Melville's story and it is an example of the cultural and literary enquiries that have been made into the uneasy connection between nature and industrialisation, so much so that this obsession and anxiety has been a major concern in writing for the last two centuries and continues into the twenty-first. Long before he reaches the paper mill, the narrator has descended into a valley, which is called "the Devil's Dungeon," so that movement through the natural world antecedes his arrival at the infernal region of Tartarus.

What Melville's story shows is that in the nineteenth century, American writers were already fascinated, both excited and worried, by the advent of technology. What technology brought with it was the rise of the exceptional individual, be he inventor, factory owner, or entrepreneur in what was supposed

to be a republic of equality. The ascendance of this individual through the manipulation of *the metallic necessity* would also result in the control of those who would operate the very wealth-making machines. As the mill owner puts it, "[w]e want none but steady workers: twelve hours to the day, day after day, through three hundred and sixty-five days, excepting Sundays, Thanksgiving, and Fast-days" (Melville 2007: 84). It is ironic, too, that Melville bases his story round the manufacture of paper, because every conceivable form of writing "would be writ on those now vacant things," and the blank sheets would eventually be put to "strange uses," some of which would be the writings considered in this paper, including Melville's own story.

The paper-mill owner in "The Tartarus of Maids" demonstrates the idea of the exceptional man very well. Ralph Waldo Emerson had put forward the idea of the outstanding individual in his series of lectures collected as *Representative Men* (1850). There is, of course, an extraordinary ambiguity in what Emerson writes in his essay on "Napoleon, or, the Man of the World" and what he wrote in such essays as "The Transcendentalist," "Nature," "Self-Reliance," and "The Over-Soul," which preached individualism, whilst grounding themselves in a democratic vista of a new America. True, the "Napoleon" lecture shows Napoleon to be a flawed and ambivalent figure, but he is also a man who is shown to be "thoroughly modem." It is this modernity, which is at the centre of the essay. Napoleon, we are told, "comes to be a bureau for all intelligence, wit, and power, of the age and country" (Emerson 1983: 729). There is, indeed, the hint of a certain disapproval in the attempt to place Napoleon as the focal point of the modem world, because Emerson's opening words on the two antagonistic classes in American society point to the conflict between old money, represented by the conservatives, "the idea capitalists," and the "young and poor," the democrats who are eager to make money. Napoleon, here, stands for the new democratic element, which is "selfish also, encroaching, bold, self-relying, always outnumbering" the conservatives, who are selfish, timid, illiberal, and who loathe innovation. And it is innovation that is at the heart of American modernity. In many ways, a representative of the hide-bound conservatives is the family from which Henry Adams sprang and which would be no longer dynamic for Emerson, tying the "interests of dead labor" up in stocks, property, and land. Napoleon, on the other hand, is the "incarnate Democrat" (Emerson 1983: 727). If the rising generation of young entrepreneurs push selfishly in their self-reliance, however, there is an inconsistency running through Emerson's argument, because in his essay, "Self-Reliance," he had already hinted at the self-reliant youth with approval,

"for he cumbers himself never about consequences, about interests: he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him: he does not court you" (Emerson 1983: 261).

Napoleon, for Emerson (1983:727), was a representative of that democratic class which "desires to keep open every avenue to the competition of all, and to multiply avenues; - the class of business men in America, in England, in France and throughout Europe; the class of industry and skill." The dark side of all this was that Napoleon was "destitute of generous sentiments" and was both "egotistical and monopolizing," as well as a "boundless liar." Emerson's list could go on and on and his essay could act as a mirror to what he saw as the dangers of the American scene in the mid-nineteenth century. To an extent, the essay underpins a strand in the period's writing, in which the reliance on and worship of nature is set against the development of industrialisation and the belief, so prevalent in the century, of an unbridled and unbounded progress. If Napoleon has no generosity and stands for the ultimate egoist, Emerson has also directed us to what he did not like about the United States and its future. For him, Napoleon was not a gentleman, and so a cad, in other words. He becomes an imposter and a rogue, fully deserving "the epithet of Jupiter Scapin, or a sort of Scamp Jupiter" (Emerson 1983: 744). In one form or another, others would take this up in the context of American technologists and innovators. Napoleon represents the social engineer, the engineer of human souls, in that phrase attributed to Stalin: the engineer makes and adapts machines; the writer makes and adapts the human being.

For Emerson (1983: 744), both the conservative, representing the old, and the young democrat will converge, as the younger takes on the atrophying attributes of the previous generation, "because both parties stand on the one ground of the supreme value of property, which one endeavours to get and the other to keep." The ultimately pessimistic tone of the work would be taken up by those writers contemporary with, and following on from, Emerson's ideas on American democracy. Napoleon as "cipher" was a theme in the essay, and by extension the democratic, innovative imperative in his modem America is one in which original thought is replaced by an immersion in and total absorption of the surrounding world, so that Napoleon, as the man of the world, is a "ciphering operative [who] knows what he is working with and what is the product" (Emerson 1983: 730). It is in the nature of the modem world for Emerson that all human beings are turned into operatives and because of Napoleon's knowledge of minerals, machines, and men, "the old, iron-bound, feudal France was shaped into the young Ohio or New York." Nevertheless,

Napoleon's system was founded on military power and the middle class lives on such military imperatives, especially in America:

> I call Napoleon the agent or attorney of the middle class of modem society; of the throng who fill the markets, shops, counting-houses, manufactories, ships, of the modem world, aiming to be rich. He was the agitator, the destroyer of prescription, the internal improver, the liberal, the radical, the inventor of means, the opener of doors and markets, the subverter of monopoly and abuse. (Emerson 1983: 742)

Emerson, then, despite all his doubts about the rise of technology in the country, fixes the figure of Napoleon into a peculiarly American theme, one in which praise and respect are directed, albeit grudgingly, towards the engineer, whether he deals with machines or manipulates human beings. Underlying Emerson's essay, despite himself, is a contradiction, because there is an acknowledgement that the mechanic and the opportunist are representative men in the country, even if this appreciation of the "can-do" mentality is tinged with uncertainty and anxiety about the questionable morality of such people. Emerson (1983: 738) himself uses technological images for Napoleon's energy: "this strong steam-engine does our work," because "we feel the air purified by the electric shock." The first of these images - the steam-engine - is, of course, typically iconic of the nineteenth century in its portrayal of power thrusting forward, while the second will flow through the words of many writers up to and including Elenry Adams. Force and energy are combined. As Eric Mottram (1989: 93) observes, Melville imagines Captain Ahab as a man moving along rails:

> Once Moby-Dick is imagined as "the modem railway" and Ahab's energy as electricity, the *Pequod* crew become subservient to capitalist technology. It is a short step to the bridge, the tunnel, and the plane together comprising "the gigantic powerhouse" for Hart Crane in *The Bridge* (1930), and to the industrial war machine of Moloch that is the focus of damnation in Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956).

Walt Whitman praised technology in his celebration of the opening of the Suez Canal and the connection of the main American railways ("Passage to India," 1871), the two events having taken place in 1869. Both Whitman and Emily Dickinson have poems in praise of railway locomotives, though if Dickinson was thrilled to see a railway engine "lap the miles" and Whitman took pleasure in its "[fjierce-throated beauty," then Emerson had voiced his anxieties as early as 1846, in his "Ode to W. H. Charming," because he had always worried over where control lay, with human beings or with the machines themselves:

> The horseman serves the horse,
> The neatherd serves the neat,
> The merchant serves the purse,
> The eater serves his meat;
> 'Tis the day of the chattel,
> Web to weave, and com to grind;
> Things are in the saddle,
> And ride mankind.

The "Ode to W. H. Channing" glosses Emerson's "Napoleon" essay in a way that emphasises the negative aspects of technological progress, though forty years later, many Americans believed that if engineering had not completely overcome nature, then it had gained the upper hand and had subdued it. Many had, nevertheless, resisted the forces of technology, as Melville had in "The Tartarus of Maids" and in *Moby-Dick* itself. As Tony Tanner (1988: xiv) writes, commenting on a passage in Chapter 114, "The Gilder," when the *Pequod* is becalmed:

> Here the loom of the book weaves together some of the deepest organising and engendering concerns of the book. These include the destinationless circularity of all human efforts - a dis-teleological vision which ran exactly counter to nineteenth-century versions of unilinear Progress and Evolutions.

Progress and (mechanical/industrial) evolution had their literary and social detractors and there are varied and common instances of "a machine (railroad or steamship) bursting on a peaceful natural setting [, which] represented a symbolic version of the trauma inflicted on American society by unexpectedly rapid mechanization" (Trachtenberg 1982: 39).

Opposition to mechanical progress became evident in the number of strikes that took place in the boom-and-bust years between 1873 and 1896. In 1873, there had been a series of coal strikes, railway wagons derailed, and coal-tips burned. The employers sent in the Pinkerton Agency, which resulted in the conviction and execution of nineteen ringleaders in 1877. In that year, the great railway strike led to civil war between railway strikers and the Pennsylvanian state militia, which caused twenty-five deaths and millions of dollars' worth of damage. Order was only restored when federal troops were sent in, and what has been called the first national American strike only added to the fears of those who had written about the rise of technology. As industrialisation and urbanisation accelerated in postbellum America, the self-reliant individual, so beloved of, say, Emerson and Thoreau, was submerged. Alfred North Whitehead

was later to state what was already becoming true in the late nineteenth-century that "The self-sufficient independent man, with his peculiar property which concerns no one else, is a concept without any validity for modem civilization" (qtd. in Matthiessen 1979: 77).

Henry David Thoreau saw the rise of the engineer as not only dangerous, but inevitably trivial. If Whitehead saw the independent man as irrelevant to modem society, Thoreau (1983: 95-96) saw aspects of mechanical progress as diminishing rather than enhancing American relations or communications:

> We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. [...] We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that Princess Adelaide has whooping cough.

Two hits here for the price of one, of course, one aimed at Europe and the other directed at the significance or otherwise of progress. The "broad, flapping American ear," (Thoreau 1983: 95), however, remained deaf to Thoreau's enjoinments and American culture was to be governed by two large images - the Civil War, which was the first modem war, total and technological, and the Machine. To be sure, Nature continued to play its part, but the Civil War and the Machine were inextricably linked. The war itself was to be seen in industrial terms, as when Stephen Crane (1983: 105), for example, described the conflict: "The battle was like the grinding of an immense and terrible machine to him. Its complexities and powers, its grim processes fascinated him. He must get closer and see it produce corpses." Robert Hughes (1997: 271) reminds us that if warfare was compared to a machine, then it was further documented by other machines because it was "the first American conflict to be described by the modem art of photography."

Europe, stretching back to Crevecoeur and others, and moving through the nineteenth century, was usually seen as having an unmodified feudal system, which was built on tyranny and superstition. Engineering technology could be the instrument of change and would conquer the Old World. The rise of American industrial power transformed the nation in dramatic ways: the image of the machine was complex and its symbolic status had contradictions built into it. As we have seen, Melville's response in "The Tartarus of Maids" was decidedly bleak. Alan Trachtenberg (1982: 38-39) points to this aspect of an evolving way of life:

> If the machine seemed the supreme cause of the abundance of new products changing the character of daily life, it also seemed responsible for newly visible poverty, slums, and an unexpected wretchedness of industrial conditions. While it inspired confidence in some quarters, it also provoked dismay, often arousing hope and gloom in the same minds. For, accompanying the mechanization of industry, of transportation, and of daily existence, were the most severe contrasts yet visible in American society, [...] which seemed to make a mockery of the republican dream, a haunting paradox.

A case in point is the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876 to celebrate the republic's first century of independence. Viewing the objects on display, some thought machinery had gone out of control, as did the economist, David Wells. Mechanization was for him like one of America's vast rivers bursting its banks and flooding the surrounding land (Trachtenberg 1982: Chapter 2).

For most visitors, though, the wonders of technology represented the future. The Corliss Double Walking-Beam Steam Engine powered the whole exhibition, whilst a gigantic electrical pendulum clock controlled twenty-six "slave" clocks. The Exposition, with its newly-invented typewriter, Bell's telephone, and other labour-saving machinery heralded the dawn of the American engineer as hero. Walt Whitman's "Song of the Exposition" is a paean to American inventiveness and an exhortation to the classical Muse to leave behind the Old World for the newer America:

> Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,
> Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
> That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings,
> Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus,
> Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate and on Mount Moriah,
> The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish castles and Italian collections,
> For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried domain awaits demands you. (Whitman 1976: 226)

America is the "fresher, busier sphere," which becomes the centre of a geographical space made new by invention. In its celebration of invention and building, this poem also has an element of reconciliation because the poet remembers what he witnessed in the Civil War. The Exposition, and by extension, the maker or engineer, is identified not with war and violence, but with a peace in which technology would allow Whitman to erase the memory of the maimed,

dead and dying in battle. Crane's later simile of war being like a machine is here reversed into pacific hopefulness, in which even Thoreau's contempt for telegraphic communication is subsumed into Whitman's "delicate cable." He is ebullient and wishes to abolish "themes of war," replacing military might, so that "in its stead speed industry's campaigns,/With thy undaunted armies, engineering" (Whitman 1976: 230). For Americans by the 1880s, as Robert Hughes (1997: 279) has shown, *homo artifex* was indispensable: "the factory, the bridge, the dam, the dry dock were all parts of the Cathedral of Making, as the Grand Canyon was the temple of Nature."

Mark Twain's story "My Watch - An Instructive Little Story" illustrates the darker side of this belief in what Europeans were coming to call "the American System." Written in 1870, "My Watch" prefigures^ *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur s Court* (1889) in its concern for things mechanical. The narrator's new watch runs down and it is taken to a jeweller's shop, so that the narrator can set it to the right time by one of the clocks there. The result is advice and tinkering by a number of watchmakers; all this leads to various calamities, in which time slows and speeds up until the watch "would reel off the next twenty-four hours in six or seven minutes, and then stop with a bang" (Twain 1985: 64). Two themes run through this story, one being a reflection on changes in the concept of time itself during the century and the other the unreliability of the various watchmakers' (and, by extension, mechanics') skills. Although a slight piece in itself, "My Watch" represents a meditation on the age of engineering and time management modifying industrial practices: "My uncle William (now deceased, alas!) used to say that a good horse was a good horse until it had run away once, and that a good watch was a good watch until the repairers got a chance at it" (Twain 1985: 64).

This is the age of Frederick Taylor's time-and-motion studies and the development of his theory of "scientific management." Again, Trachtenberg (1982: 69) notes:

> Frederick W. Taylor, a foreman at the Midvale Steel Company in Pennsylvania, inaugurated in the 1880s his famous "time study" experiments, aimed at the elimination of waste, inefficiency, and what he called "soldiering" on the part of the workers. With his stopwatch - a further encroachment of time on physical movement - Taylor proposed to systematize [...] the absolute subordination of "living labor" to the machine. [...] In *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), Taylor made explicit the heart of his program: to take possession for management of the "mass of traditional knowledge" once possessed by the workers themselves.

Taylor's intentions of reducing the human being to that of an adjunct of the machine can be seen, of course, in Melville's writings and leads us to Hank Morgan in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), who is a foreman at the Colt factory in Hartford. American know-how engineering is then transported to Arthurian England. What Hank Morgan attempts to do is what Taylor introduced into the factories of North America. Twain uses the technique of looking backwards in order to cast light on the contemporary scene. *A Connecticut Yankee* is a parody of the romance genre and it tackles the complex themes of agrarianism and industrialisation, primitivism and progress. Twain's own feelings about the past and the present were ambiguous and in the course of the novel what emerges is a highly ironic pastoral. The book is not only a critique of mediaeval England, in which sixth-century superstition and monarchy are confronted by modem technology, but is also a reaction to Thoreau's pastoralism and the worries of Hawthorne and Melville.

Hank Morgan, is not only a foreman - the "head superintendent," as he calls himself- "with a couple of hundred rough men" under him at the Colt factory, but he has "learned to make everything - guns, revolvers, cannon, boilers, engines, all sorts of labour-saving machinery" (Twain 1981: 39). Morgan is an all-purpose mechanic of the new order, an adaptable man and one of the new kind of employees bom into the era of mass production. Twain's initial setting is important, too, because the Colt factory in Hartford, where Morgan learned and carried out his "can-do" skills, had grown from making revolvers into a major centre of scientific and technological research and invention, where the latest manufacturing techniques were enhanced by the growth of precision machinery and the latest managerial methods. Samuel Colt had himself been an inventor and the revolvers that "won the West" were considered on the Frontier to be levellers: "God created man; Colonel Colt made them equal" (this slogan has various unclear origins, but the safest attribution seems to come from an early Colt Manufacturing advertisement, thought up by Samuel Colt himself). Nevertheless, it does focus attention on Hank Morgan, because he is the very opposite of those who grew up in an agrarian world, being a recent urban variation of man. Thomas Jefferson may have wanted Americans to be farmers, but Hank Morgan illustrates the late century's reversal of the pastoral dream.

Morgan is transported to Camelot after being hit on the head by one of his "rough men" and *A Connecticut Yankee* replaces the quest for the Holy Grail with the establishment of a colony in England, in which Morgan attempts to bring "the civilisation of the nineteenth-century booming." In his "Man Factories," he plans to turn "groping and grubbing automata into *men"* (Twain

1981: 159). What Morgan introduces in his managerial revolution is the idea of self in competition, and to these ends he uses social and technical engineering. If, as noted earlier, Emerson's modem man was incarnated in Napoleon, then Morgan is an extension of this idea, because he believes that "training is all there is to a person. We speak of nature; it is a folly; there is no such thing as nature" (Twain 1981: 161). Hank's peaceful revolution is engineered through a number of machines, which manipulate and modify men. In addition, he introduces American baseball, which he believes will democratise the feudal population in an especially American way and train everyone for team labour. His very American hopes are used with a deepening irony, however, because Twain, very much an enthusiast for engineering progress, had come to have his own doubts about the turn industrialisation was taking in America.

A Connecticut Yankee began as a comic satire and was initially directed against Arthurian chivalry. It was aimed at removing European feudal instincts and replacing them with the practical language of America, but as Twain continued to write it, the tone became darker. Morgan had begun his modernisation with dynamism and enthusiasm. It is appropriate that his schools are known as "Man Factories," and his introduction of newspapers, telephones, and industrial production are attempts at eliminating backwardness and turning attention to the progressive future. At the same time, however, we increasingly become aware that underneath the comic bravura there is something blinkered and manic in Hank Morgan's struggle to engineer an American republic in Camelot. Having started his project by organising the Knights of the Round Table for practical purposes and having turned them from chivalric elitism, the lone hero is finally defeated by the Church and chivalry. "The Boss," as he has come to be known, retreats to a defensive barrier with his chief supporter, Clarence, and "fifty-two fresh, bright, well-educated, clean-minded young British boys" (Twain 1981: 391), who have been left untainted by what he sees as religious superstition.

The defensive base is fortified and, as "The Boss" tells Clarence, "We shan't have to leave our fortress, now, when we want to blow up civilisation" (Twain 1981: 386). His armoury includes an electrified fence, thirteen Gatling guns (invented in 1861), and "glass cylinder dynamite torpedoes" (invented in 1864), whilst Merlin's cave is used to generate electricity. *A Connecticut Yankee* ends with a technological holocaust: "I touched a button and set fifty electric suns aflame on top of our precipice" (Twain 1981: 404). If Huck Finn does not want anyone to "sivilize" him and lights out for the Territory, Hank Morgan's experiments in modernisation leave him trapped behind an electric fence, surrounded by the bodies of slaughtered enemies that his war machines

have dealt with. Mark Twain's ambiguity about industrial ingenuity can be summed up in Merlin's words. Disguised as an old woman, he has infiltrated the encampment: "Ye were conquerors; ye are conquered" (Twain 1981: 407).

A Connecticut Yankee contains anxiety about the sinister manoeuvrings of the new technology and the underlying argument questions whether human beings will benefit from the engineering imperative or will be ultimately destroyed by it, as "The Boss" is in the final sequence of the book. In *Life on the Mississippi*, written in 1883, Twain had looked back nostalgically to earlier days and portrayed the riverboat pilot, Horace Bixby, as hero in complete control of the technology at his command and who works for the benefit of others. Pilotage, we are told, is "a science" and in learning his craft, the pilot's eye changes. Natural beauty gives way to a precise reading of the river, whilst the engines of the boat (the machine) take on great importance. Twain (1984: 122-23) makes an important comment on the style and functions of a pilot on a riverboat:

> The moment that boat was underway in the river, she was under the sole and unquestioned control of the pilot. He could do with her exactly as he pleased, run her when and whither he chose, and tie her up at the bank whenever his judgment said that course was best. His movements were entirely free; he consulted no one, he received commands from nobody, he promptly resented even the merest suggestions. Indeed, the law of the United States forbade him to listen to commands and suggestions, rightly considering that the pilot necessarily knew better how to handle the boat than anybody could tell him.

The difference between Hank Morgan and Horace Bixby is not only that of fiction and reality, but also because in one sphere work is done with care in the natural world, whereas in the world of Camelot, Morgan is "an ancestor of the Vandal with sidearms and a marketing plan" (Powers 2005: 523). In Bixby, the reader is presented with the notion of the highly-skilled man whose abilities are founded in the Emersonian notion of self-reliance. What Morgan wished to do to Camelot was becoming grim reality during the later years of the century because the new immigrants to the urban, industrial centres were to be rapidly moulded into the "scientific management" model of industrialisation. The new discipline demanded conformity and rationalised behaviour. The slavery of work depicted in Melville became fact because factories demanded clock-based and regularised attendance, both of which brought with them repetitively ordered work patterns. A booklet produced to teach English to Polish labourers at the International Harvester Corporation illustrates this clearly:

> Lesson One. I hear the whistle. I must hurry. I hear the five-minute whistle. It is time to go into the shop. I take my check from the gate board and hand it on the department board. I change my clothes and get ready to work. The starting whistle blows. I eat my lunch. It is forbidden to eat until then. The whistle blows at five minutes of starting time. I get ready to go to work. I work until the whistle blows to quit. I leave my place nice and clean. I put all my clothes in the locker. I must go home. (qtd. in Guttman 1976: 15)

So, who imposed the discipline? Fictional characters like Hank Morgan in *A Connecticut Yankee*, or, real-life figures like Frederick Taylor, men who raised themselves within the hierarchical system of which they were part. Ownership, direction, and labour were separated, unlike in earlier rural American communities.

Yet, whilst all this was going on in America, the last years of the century also saw an element of utopian fiction, of which the most popular was *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* by Edward Bellamy. It was published in 1888, a year before *A Connecticut Yankee*, and gives the reader a technological interpretation of a mechanised America, organised to "the unbounded possibilities of human nature" (Bellamy 1888: 126). Bellamy is saying that there is hope in the future. *Looking Backward* gives a portrait of a future world, which is highly industrialised, though Bellamy's early readers were able to draw out the potential (and hopeful) tendencies already taking place in 1887 and in so doing reach conclusions about the Boston of 2000.

Bellamy's protagonist, Julian West, is transported into the future, but while Twain's Morgan is hit on the head, West has become sick - unable to sleep, he sends his servant for a mesmerist and falls into a 113-year coma in a sealed room in the bowels of his house. West is, in fact, suffering from "the nervous tension of the public mind" (Bellamy 1888: 11). George M. Beard's pioneering work, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (1884), had likened the human nervous system to a machine suffering from the strain of contemporary life and Bellamy's West is a product of this stress. As West's guide and mentor in the new world explains, "riches debauched one class with idleness and riches of mind and body, whilst poverty sapped the vitality of the masses by overwork, bad food, and pestilent homes" (Bellamy 1888: 98).

Julian West is a latter-day Rip Van Winkle, but whereas Rip wakes up a new American man, West wakes up to a nationalised state in which the means of production have been taken over by the state and where consumerism overarches everything. Bellamy's utopia is highly structured and regimented, and, as Dr

Leete, the guide, explains, the "principle of military service" is applied to the world of work. Labour is controlled and there is a hierarchy of workers, based on merit; this in turn leads to the consumption of goods, which can be bought in what West sees as warehouses. Shopping has disappeared and trade credits are issued for goods already ordered. As Robert Wiebe (1967: 70) observes:

> Because the government, which had replaced private owners in industry, oversaw the distribution of labor and goods, a later generation would find ominous hints of totalitarianism in Bellamy's message. But his contemporaries understood. Government returned to the people in a society attuned to the moral laws quite literally eliminated government as a distinct institution.

The American world no longer has any private enterprise and the state controls the means of production and directs the work force, but happiness becomes entirely dependent on leisure and consumption, because after a period of compulsory labour service, everyone is given up to pleasure. There would be a future for an industrialised landscape in the United States. It is interesting that this city-world was to be rejected by William Morris in Britain and was to be rejected by many dystopian writers in America.

Ignatius Donnelly, the agrarian senator from Minnesota, despaired of both the governing classes and the capacity of the masses for leadership, and these ideas fed into his *Caesar's Column* (1891), where the underground organisation, the Brotherhood of Death, reacts against and challenges the "gigantic abnormal selfishness which ruins millions for the benefit of thousands" (Donnelly 1891:68). In *Caesar's Column,* technology makes the future problematic and class war is fought with the machinery of mass destruction. Civilisation collapses into civil war: "an age of bribery terminates in one colossal crime of corruption" (Donnelly 1891: 172). War results in a holocaust akin to Hank Morgan's apocalyptic end and the narrator can "see, like a great black rain of gigantic drops, the lines of the falling bombs against the clear-blue sky" (Donnelly 1891: 172). The future lies in Africa, where the nucleus of a new pastoral civilisation, strangely ignorant of the present inhabitants, will found a new order. The group is saved from the ruins of New York by a hovering aircraft, which is given the ominous name, "Demon." "We stood on the deck. The engineer touched the lever of the electric engine: the great bird swayed for an instant, and then began to rise, like a veritable Phoenix from its nest of flame, surrounded by its cataracts of sparks" (Donnelly 1891: 197).

Despite the fact that this electric dynamism was so embedded in the period, the new society envisaged by Donnelly in Africa is definitely ««technological:

"We do not give any encouragement to labor-saving inventions, although we do not discard them. We think the end of government should be - not cheap goods or cheap men, but happy families. If any man makes a serviceable invention the state purchases it at a reasonable price for the benefit of the people" (Donnelly 1891: 210). Donnelly's book is filled with the negative aspects of technology and argues for a return to an earlier rural society, where large urban conurbations are forbidden, and where people live in agricultural communities of the kind described by earlier pastoral writers. Eric Mottram (1989: 111-12) remarks that *Caesars Column*,

> tries to convert "metallic necessity" into an agrarian Phoenix state in which "the ingenuity of man," which had "conquered the forces of steam and electricity," is applied to "the great adjustments of society, on which the happiness of millions depends." The result is a class-structured isolationism, "a garden of peace and beauty" with a distinctly Jeffersonian intentionality. History repeats itself for the nth time as nostalgic utopian fiction.

For Henry Adams, the avoidance of the anxieties considered above would only come out of unifying the comprehension of what constituted *energy*, both electrical and sexual. Americans could only develop when they discovered that morality had to be combined with knowledge of science and technology. In addition, they would have to understand the historical and future role of women in society, as well as what power politics meant. If they did not come to an understanding of all these, American life would be continuously disastrous: "The new American must be either the child of the new forces or a chance sport of nature. The attraction of mechanical power had already wrenched the American mind into a crab-like process" (Adams 1973: 501).

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Michael Hamburger's Crusade against Ignorance and Prejudice: German Poetry and the United States

Preliminaries

In his obituary for Michael Hamburger, published in *The Independent* in June 2007, Iain Galbraith (2007) expresses the view that with Hamburger's death "the English language takes leave of one of its most gifted and gently influential poets as well as the twentieth-century's most distinguished and prolific translator of German poetry." But where does one start when analysing the influence one individual person has exercised on the reception of German Literature in America? Every critic must be conscious of the fact that in most cases he has only access to insignificant external characteristics, such as reviews in specialised magazines which, more often than not, have nothing to do with the actual reception of a book among the reading public, and letters to the editors of such magazines. Remarks in autobiographies or books of criticism may give some impression of the particular influence a writer or a book of translation has had on the career of an individual colleague. If fortunate, one may even persuade publishers to look up their statistics, if available, and provide hard facts such as print-runs and sales figures. Nonetheless, these superficialities do not throw light on the reception process that takes place between a book and its readership. A writer's reputation in a country other than his own depends almost entirely on the ability and taste of his translators, provided that this particular author's work is selected for translation in the first place. A translator not only influences the reception process by the way in which he translates a text, but also by what he considers worth translating. The smaller the market - the number of translators and translations - is, the greater the extent the influence of particular translator-editors can be felt, which may result in false heroes and strange gods, i.e., an overrepresentation of particular authors in foreign countries, which does not correspond with the real stature of their work. On the other hand, translators may even resurrect authors from oblivion, as is the

case with Hamburger and Franz Baermann Steiner (1992a: 38-39 and 1992b), never recognized in the German-speaking countries. The authors selected by Hamburger have been fortunate in their translator.

Hamburger's Various Artistic Masks: Translator-Editor and Critic

Hamburger seems to have influenced the American reception of German Literature on various levels: as translator, editor of anthologies, critic, and poet. His first major book to appear in the States was *Beethoven: Letters, Journals, and Conversations*, which was published by Pantheon Books (New York) together with the London press Thames & Hudson in 1951. The former publishing house was directed by Kurt Wolff, an eminent German émigré publisher, who in 1961 founded his Helen & Kurt Wolff Books imprint, which he edited as a specialist list within the big Harcourt Brace Jovanovich publishing conglomerate. In 1953, Wolff published Hamburger's first Hölderlin collection to appear in the States entitled *Hölderlin: His Poems*, whose British edition had been issued by Harvill Press one year earlier. It was a revised and enlarged edition of *Poems* published in 1943, of which Hamburger said that it

> came out far too early, when I was too young. All I had was enthusiasm, but no knowledge. I did not even understand the metres of Hölderlin's poems and so I translated them into free verse. When I was in the army from 1943 to 1947 I reworked these translations and added new ones as well. First I found the Harvill Press, who published it in England. As I was already in touch with Wolff I must have mentioned it to him that this book was coming out and he took it over.
>
> (Hamburger 1998)

Hölderlin: His Poems, with prose translations below the original, was reviewed by Lisel Mueller, a poet and translator, in the January 1963 issue of *Poetry* (Chicago). In this very favourable review the critic stresses that Hamburger "presents us with a fair and generous selection of Hölderlin's poems [...] including] all the famous expansive poems from the middle period [...]. It is in these poems that the diction [...] becomes extremely difficult with its inverted syntax, incremental appended clauses, and ambiguous usage of single words" (Mueller 1963:289). Fourteen years later University of Michigan Press at Ann Arbor published Hamburger's - once again - revised edition entitled *Poems and Fragments.* This happened through the mediation of the poet Donald Hall, who had, together with his co-editors Robert Pack and Louis Simpson, included some of Hamburger's own poems in the anthology

New Poets of England and America (Cleveland: Meridian, 1957). Many of the revisions included in the Michigan Press edition had already been incorporated by Hamburger into Penguin's *Selected Poems* published in 1961.

The same year the Bollingen Foundation published Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Poems and Verse Plays*, edited by Hamburger, in their Bollingen Series. In .4 *Mug's Game: Intermittent Memoirs 1924-1954*, Hamburger reports the following about the difficulties involved in the publication of this volume:

> Early in the new year [1951] 1 got down to work on the Beethoven book. At the same time Stephen Spender telephoned, suggesting that he and I collaborate over the Hofmannsthal translations he was doing for the Bollingen Foundation. A line-by-line collaboration proved impossible. Each of us translated different works. After complications of various kinds, and the lapse of nearly a decade, the editorship was offered to me. Since that was a way of breaking the deadlock, I accepted, with Stephen's generous consent. (Hamburger 1973: 251)

Both Spender and Hamburger contributed translations to the volume, which finally included twenty-three lyrics and six verse plays, mostly written during Hofmannsthal's early youth, in the 1890s, with complete German texts facing the English, and a preface by T. S. Eliot. In her review published in *Poetry* (Chicago), Lisel Mueller pays attention to the American readers' ignorance of Hofmannsthal and provides useful background information to the period covered by the volume. But she also refers to particular difficulties Hofmannsthal's translators had to face up to:

> The various translators do an able job with the unrhymed material, but often run afoul of rhyme and metre, when they try to reproduce it in English. Hofmannsthal frequently uses rhyming verbs, and since the verb, in German, normally occurs at the end of a clause or sentence, this works out well, but carried over into English, it produces an effect of awkward inversion and "poetic" rhetoric. Then, too, in a perfectly scanning translation, there is always the need to add words to fill out the line - German words generally requiring more syllables than the corresponding English ones - and these extra words, usually adjectives, are at least superfluous and sometimes confusing. (Mueller 1963: 289-90)

In 1963 the Bollingen Foundation published another Hofmannsthal volume edited by Hamburger entitled *Selected Plays and Libretti*, which contains three plays and three libretti: *Electra* (trans. Alfred Schwarz), *The Salzburg Great Theatre of the World* (trans. Vernon Watkins), *The Cavalier of the Rose* (trans. Christopher Holme), *Arabella* (trans. Nora Wydenbruck and Christopher Middleton), *The Difficult Man*, which Edwin Muir "had wanted to translate before

he became ill" (Hamburger 1973: 252) and was finally translated by Willa Muir, and Hamburger himself contributed his rendering of the sombre tragedy *The Tower*. Both volumes were distributed by Pantheon Books, who - as was already mentioned - published Hamburger's first book of translation in the States. In 1970 Princeton University Press published the editor's introductions to the two volumes of Hofmannsthal's *Selected Works* separately as a critical book entitled *Hofmannsthal: Three Essays*, which, Hamburger stresses, was taken quite seriously by Hofmannsthal scholars.

Günter Grass, the novelist, was introduced to the American audience with Ralph Manheim's rendering of *The Tin Drum*, published by Pantheon in 1963. Although John Simon, in his review for *Partisan Review*, considers Grass's novel a German approximation of *Ulysses*, he slaughters Manheim's translation:

> It is to be deplored that *The Tin Drum* comes to English readers diminished by Ralph Manheim's translation: in length, by well over a hundred pages; in quality, inestimably. Much that was either too difficult, or seemed too elaborate or obscene, has been flattened out, abridged, or omitted. On almost every page constructions, jokes, meanings are weakened, disregarded, or missed. None of which, however, has kept the translation from being extolled by literary and academic reviewers alike. (Simon 1963: 452)

His American reputation as a poet, however, Grass almost exclusively owes to Hamburger and Middleton. At a time when Grass had only published two collections of poetry, *Die Vorzüge der Windhühner* (1956) and *Glasdreieck* (1960), Hamburger and Middleton collected their translations of Grass's poems to be published as *Selected Poems* by Helen & Kurt Wolff Books (New York) in 1966. Four of Hamburger's translations had been included in *Modem German Poetry 1910-1960: An Anthology with Verse Translations*, issued by New York's Grove Press in 1962. Hamburger did not approach Grass when arranging the latter's bi-lingual *Selected Poems'*. "It would not have been any good sending him the early translations, because I do not think he knew any English to speak of at the time. Now he knows a bit of English, but even so I do not think he would want to be bothered with checking the translations" (Hamburger 1998). Anthony Hecht, who reviewed it for *The Hudson Review*, welcomes its publication, describing Grass as "an excellent poet," who

> deals with fantasy, irony, humor, and of his predecessors seems most to resemble Erich Kästner and Bertold Brecht, though his irony is less savage and crude than Brecht's. The translations [...] should not have been remarkably difficult to do, for Grass writes in a rather free form, and none of the poems included here employ

> rhyme; and on the whole the translators seem pretty well to have succeeded, though there are moments of odd awkwardness. [...] Even so, Grass is a pleasure to read, even in translation. (Hecht 1966: 338)

In her review for *Poetry* (Chicago), Lisel Mueller (1968: 338) states that Grass "falls into the category of poets who "work" in English, and Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton prove so in their translation." She characterises Grass's poems as "structures of specific, concrete, everyday speech imposed on bizarre backgrounds." Mueller goes beyond Hecht's categorizing by calling him "witty, brilliant, angry." To the American readership she introduces Grass as

> the moralist exposing our cupidity and stupidity, but he does it playfully, by showing us grotesqueries, odd juxtapositions. Folding chairs embody homelessness and dislocation; spoons are the curved shape of experience; situations that have been surrounded by sentiment are suddenly, and shockingly, seen in a vacuum. His surrealism can be obscure, but more often it comes frighteningly close. And he is capable also of the bitterly plain and brief statement [...]. (Mueller 1968: 338)

At the time Middleton had, more or less, dropped out as Grass's translator, and this is why the later collections, with one exception, have been translated by Hamburger exclusively. In 1969 it was again Helen & Kurt Wolff Books who published the bi-lingual collection *New Poems,* Hamburger's translation of Grass's third collection *Ausgefragt {Questioned).* R. H. W. Dillard (1969: 426-27), in his review for *The Kenyon Review,* found the collection "as interesting and admirable as the earlier *Selected Poems."* In the reviewer's opinion, "the book does achieve a dawn, a March in its own way, but its journey is bleak and surprising, as blunt as the fist Grass drew to burst from the dust jacket. Its poetry is as vital as Eberhart's, as honest as McAfee's." In April 1977 the same press published *In the Egg and Other Poems,* which included on its 143 pages most of the older and some new translations by Hamburger and the handful of Middleton's translations from Grass's first American volume. Since then they have issued *Drawings & Words 1954-1977* (1982) in Hamburger's and Walter Arndt's renderings and *Etchings & Words 1972-1982* (1985), which only contains translations by Hamburger. In April 1996 Harvest Books printed *Novemberland: Selected Poems 1956-1993,* its title deriving from a sequence of thirteen sonnets first published by the literary magazine *Agenda* in its "German Poetry Special Issue" in summer 1994. It is noticeable that this bilingual volume which contains fifty-four poems was published in both a hardback and a paperback edition. In

1999 Faber & Faber, whose American headquarters are in Boston, published Grass's *Selected Poems 1956 to 1993*, with translations by Hamburger exclusively.

In addition to Grass, there are many other German-language authors that Hamburger either first introduced to American readers or whose American reception and reputation are considerably dependent on his translations. Among them are Albrecht Goes, Nelly Sachs, Adolf Muschg, Giinter Eich, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and Paul Celan. Enzensberger, Hamburger recalls, most probably initiated the publication of *Poems for People Who Don't Read Poems* by New York's Atheneum Press in 1968. The volume contains translations by Hamburger, Jerome Rothenberg, and Enzensberger, and was also published in Great Britain by Seeker & Warburg and Penguin the same year. According to Hamburger,

> these translations should not have appeared in a single book, because the two languages - American and English - cannot be mixed. So that was really a mistake. At that time one could still just about get away with English translations in America, but nowadays people would just say, this is some foreign language. Even when the early translations of mine appeared in America, the eminent poet Kenneth Rexroth said in a review quite angrily, he uses these idioms which are British and do not mean anything to us. (Hamburger 1998)

The welcome this collection received from Michael Benedikt, as "Critic of the Month" in *Poetry* (Chicago), was not warm at all; quite the opposite. Not only does he accuse Enzensberger of "a weak style of political critique," "slip[ing] from accurate, objective criticism into mere personal complaint," of "massive rhetorical denunciations" and "a general style of grievance" (Benedikt 1968: 210), but he also criticises Rothenberg's translations for misrepresenting the German poet by "talking down:"

> The trap into which he has fallen is that of feeling he has to supply the German poet with the public touch, which he has further erred by identifying with the Common Touch. Three lines from a later section of "Foam" are: "o fire-eater with the heat turned off slip me some skin / o mummy in your mummy-cloth of pink-tinged foam god bless you / deliver your bubbling gullet to my kow-tow. ..." Such phrases as "slip me some skin," "gullet," and "kow-tow" are not suggested by the German original and are, to say the least, inappropriate. It is as if Enzensberger showed up to read some political poems in the United States wearing a zoot suit.
>
> (Benedikt 1968: 210-11)

If one reads the original alongside Rothenberg's translation, one easily recognises that the reviewer is wrong with regard to "gullet." Benedikt stresses, however, that Hamburger and Enzensberger avoid "talking down."

Bloodaxe published *Selected Poems* in 1994 and *Kiosk* in early 1997, both of them being distributed in America by Dufour Editions in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania. Hamburger translated the majority of the poems published in Enzensberger's recent collections, to the latter the author added six translations of his own. The American author Lawrence Joseph, reviewing *Kiosk* for *Jacket* 4 (July 1998), an Internet quarterly edited by the Australian poet John Tranter, stresses Enzensberger's exceptional "vocal range and range of subjects" as well as two constants in his work: "his preoccupation with how a poem sounds [...] and an acute, sophisticated sense of how these voices can be constructed in a poem. Often, a poem will switch, or seem to switch, speakers; we're in aesthetic realms similar to those of Gertrude Stein, Samuel Beckett, John Ashbery" (Joseph 1998).

Paul Celan, whom Hamburger first met at Erich Fried's in London in 1952, was first introduced to a wider American readership by the inclusion of four poems - "Fugue of Death" and "The Jugs" in Middleton's renderings, "Shibboleth" and "In Memoriam Paul Éluard" translated by Hamburger - in the anthology *Modern German Poetry 1910-1960.* In 1971 it was again Dutton who took Celan's American reception history one important step further by publishing *Speech-Grille, and Selected Poems* in Joachim Neugroschel's rendering. In November 1972 Hamburger was awarded The Levinson Prize, which is presented annually by *Poetry* (Chicago), for his eleven translations of Celan (Dec. 1971) and sections IV and V of *Travelling,* published in the magazine between October 1971 and September 1972. The next year Jerry Glenn's 174-page book entitled *Paul Celan,* the first important study in the field of American Celan-criticism, appeared in Twayne's World Authors series. Persea Press in New York has been the main outlet for Hamburger's Celan-translations. They published the bi-lingual collections *Poems* (bought from Carcanet) in 1980, *Poems of Paul Celan* (bought from Anvil Press) in 1989, and an enlarged and revised edition in 1994, but, as Hamburger stressed in the interview, they triggered off hardly any response in America.

Hamburger's American reputation as editor and translator is usually associated with the publication of three mammoth bilingual anthologies: *Modern German Poetry 1910-1960* (with Middleton), *East German Poetry,* each being the first substantial collections of their sort to appear in America, and *German Poetry 1910-1975.* The reason why the first was published in 1962 by Grove

Press, New York, was that Hamburger had already established a strong association with them. In spring 1957 he contributed an essay to the inaugural issue of their magazine *Evergreen Review;* later in the same year they published his first book on German literature, *Reason and Energy,* its revised edition entitled *Contraries* being issued by Dutton fourteen years later. For this anthology Hamburger and Middleton collected up what translations each had done, put them together and then decided that "there were certain gaps and poets that neither of us had translated, but who ought to be in the book. Then we found other translators for those. We knew who was translating whom, since we both lived in London at that time and things were much more centralised than they are now" (Hamburger 1998). The anthology comprised 163 poems by fifty-five poets; in addition to the two editors, nine poets, among them Eva Hesse, Vernon Watkins, and David Luke, contributed twenty translations, which makes up only 12 per cent of the content. One third of the anthology is given over to poems by only six poets: Rainer Maria Rilke, Gottfried Benn, Georg Trakl, Georg Heym, Alfred Lichtenstein, and Bertolt Brecht. According to Hamburger, it sold pretty well both in America and in Britain, where it had to be reprinted three times.

Many critics have misunderstood the creative relationship between Hamburger and Middleton. They first met in London in 1955 when Hamburger was teaching at University College and Middleton held a post as lecturer in German at King's College. They co-operated on various translation and editorial projects until 1966 when Middleton emigrated to America to take up the chair of Germanic Languages and Literature at the University of Texas, Austin. Hamburger emphasised the fact that many critics misinterpreted the nature of their collaboration, thinking that: "we translated together. We never translated together, we put together our translations. Even when I did a written interview a couple of weeks ago, I was asked to tell the interviewers about my supposed collaboration with Christopher Middleton over translation" (Hamburger 1998).

The only text Hamburger and Middleton ever collaborated on is the 24-page Introduction to *Modern German Poetry 1910-1960,* which is a discussion of Expressionism and of the modem style in German poetry it initiated. They characterise the contents of the anthology by listing the poets omitted, who fall into six categories:

> (1) those Naturalists, Impressionists and Symbolists whose work is either anchored in nineteenth century conventions, or not directly modem in style or outlook (e.g., Liliencron, Dehmel, George); (2) those poets whose work appeared well into this century but who were not affected by modernist techniques (e.g., Schroder, Bor-

> chardt, Carossa); (3) those poets who anticipated Expressionism in certain poems, but whose style or outlook is not central to it (e.g., Mombert, Dauthendey); [...] (4) poets of those bizarre, demi-prophetic, quasi-religious or otherwise quixotic groups which may be typical of the epoch but do not invariably claim attention as sources either of its best or even of its more charactered writing (e.g., Pannwitz, zur Linde, Derleth); [...] (5) those, like Elisabeth Langgasser or Nelly Sachs, whose work resisted translation, (Hamburger and Middleton 1962: xxi)

and (6) with the exceptions of Brecht and Huchel, no East German poets are represented in the anthology, because, "when we were choosing and translating poems, we had not read enough of their work to enable us to choose representative poems" (Hamburger and Middleton 1962: xlii).

David Galler's review of the anthology published in *Poetry* (Chicago) was full of nationalist arrogance, implicit chauvinism, revenge, hatred, prejudice, and, perhaps, the sort of political correctness required at the time in some literary circles in America. Obviously, Galler had not read the anthology, but wanted to get rid of his anger bottled up over the years:

> Rilke, George, a few dozen poems by others, needed translating and received it. These "others" - Trakl and Benn among them - were given a thorough treatment next; though many of their poems weren't worth it, one could accept the translators' love and effort. Hamburger and Middleton have overshot that mark with their anthology. What becomes painfully clear is the extent to which Hitler's regime stunted German poets of all ages, silencing many, truncating a tradition by forcing many to write secretly with no immediate masters and no means for public expression. The Germans, however, are a stubborn people; this anthology shows how, despite Hitler, most of them persisted right on through in writing poems with autotelic imagery enough to make one shudder. Small poetic progress in this country for over half a century! (Galler 1964: 264)

With the next project, his bilingual *East German Poetry* anthology, which was begun under the auspices of the New York State Council for the Arts when Hamburger was Visiting Professor at State University of New York, Buffalo, in 1969 and finally published by Dutton Press in 1972, Hamburger tried to remedy one of the shortcomings of the first anthology. In this first major anthology of East German poetry to appear in the States, Hamburger collected one hundred and eighteen poems by twelve poets, with renderings by seven translators, among them Middleton, Ruth and Matthew Mead, and Christopher Levenson. Hamburger himself contributed more than half of the poems printed in the anthology, with the sections on Brecht, Heinz Kahlau, Reiner Kunze,

Wolf Biermann, and Kurt Bartsch comprising translations made by Hamburger exclusively. In the Introduction the editor stresses that "it is not a representative anthology in terms of the political division, since that would have called for the inclusion of the sort of verse most in favor with the ideological directors of the régime - exhortatory, self-congratulating pep-verse, antiquated even by the standards of the eighteen-nineties and subliterary in its complete subordination of the medium to the message" (Hamburger 1972: xv). Among the criteria for inclusion Hamburger lists "commitment to the truth of [the poets'] own perceptions, feelings, and convictions," and a preoccupation "with moral and social problems to a degree rare among non-communist poets," which, he thinks, "is another reason why their work is, or should be, of special interest to American and British readers with no direct experience of an almost totally collectivized society" (Hamburger 972: xv). He would have liked to include work by Stefan Hermlin, Erich Arendt, and Peter Gosse, but their diction and verse forms "proved too remote from the practice of their English-writing contemporaries" (Hamburger 1972: xvi).

Originally, this anthology was to be published first in America by a press in Buffalo - whose name Hamburger could not remember in the interview I conducted with him - but they let him down and nothing came of this. Then he sent it to Michael Schmidt, who accepted it and thereby started Hamburger's Carcanet career in Britain, which lasted until the early 1990s when Hamburger broke with Schmidt, who - according to Hamburger - subsequently ordered all his books to be scrapped. Dutton, who had already published the revised edition of *Reason and Energy* as *Contraries* in 1971, took it over from Carcanet. In 1977 Carcanet published Hamburger's 500-page bi-lingual anthology *German Poetry 1910-1975*, whose co-publisher should have been Urizen Books, but it was finally withdrawn. According to Hamburger,

> there was a terrible disaster of the American edition. It first went to the translator Michael Roloff of Urizen Books, who was an eminent businessman on the New York publishing scene. They must have set it separately, because obviously the Carcanet edition was all right. I remember that I corrected the proofs, but then the book came out in his form and not in mine. It was withdrawn and the man disappeared from the publishing scene. Years later I got a summons to New York to go to bankrupt proceedings. I was supposed to claim money from him for compensation for the damage, but I did not go and I just let it go. (Hamburger 1998)

Inter Nationes in Bonn bought three thousand copies for worldwide distribution, which enabled Schmidt to reprint it. In 1981 Schmidt sold the anthology

to Persea Press in New York. Although Hamburger compiled work by ninety-five poets in the anthology, he stresses that "the contents of the anthology do not represent the whole of German, Austrian, and Swiss poetry written over a period of sixty-five years" (Hamburger 1977: xxxii-xxxiii). However, it contains "good and remarkable poems of as many kinds as I could respond to as a translator" (Hamburger 1977: xxxiii). Hamburger asked Middleton whether he wanted to collaborate again, but he turned down the offer: "The reason is that by that time we were much more aware of how different the two of us were" (Hamburger 1998). According to Hamburger (1977: xxv), the anthology "sprang out of two needs: to collect scattered translations done over the decades and to replace the earlier anthology *Modern German Poetry 1910-1960,*" which both had both out of print and out of date for some years. In 1978 Hamburger was awarded the Schlegel-Tieck prize for *German Poetry 1910-1975.*

The publicity campaign for this anthology received additional impetus thanks to Hamburger's guest-co-editorship for *TriQuarterly* 35.2 (Winter 1976), which contained sections dedicated to German (edited by M. Hamburger), American (edited by Michael Anania), and French poetry (edited by Paul Auster). Hamburger was asked by the magazine's editor Elliott Anderson to select work from his - then - forthcoming anthology; the final selection, however, was made by Anderson himself, who printed twenty-seven poems by sixteen poets, such as Peter Handke, Günter Kunert, Reiner Kunze, and Jörg Steiner.

The widespread ignorance of literatures in German that Hamburger referred to when characterising the British (non-)reading public in the 1940s and 1950s in his talk entitled "The translator as an intermediary between two cultures," which was given in Amsterdam in March 1993 at the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, holds true for today's situation in America:

> As for mediation, 1 could not rely on translations alone even with German-language writers as securely established in their own cultures now as Goethe, Hölderlin or Büchner. When my work began, in the 1940s, not only was there a strong prejudice against all things German in Britain, but an ignorance that extended to the most well-educated and sophisticated circles. (Hamburger 1993: 10)

Hamburger took the offensive by initiating an educational crusade by way of complementing all his translations with "critical writings, books of essays and obligatory introductions to the works and authors I translated" (Hamburger 1993: 10). In an essay published in a special volume of the influential German magazine *Text und Kritik,* Ruth Klüger painted the same dreary picture of the US-reception of German literature in the early 1990s. If one asked Amer-

icans with an average education about twentieth-century German literature, they would most probably mention the names of Sigmund Freud and Franz Kafka. Intellectuals of the 1960s' generation might even know Thomas Mann's and Hermann Hesse's novels. Some may even have read Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum.* In her opinion, only small coteries in New York appreciated Peter Handke's and Thomas Bernhard's works, whereas US-feminists were quite keen on Christa Wolf. According to Klüger, Rilke's poetry was widely known and appreciated (Klüger 1995: 132-35).

Against this context we have to appreciate the invaluable service that two US-presses - Harcourt, Brace & World and Dutton - performed by publishing Hamburger's critical books *The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960s* (1970) and *Contraries: Studies in German Literature* (1971) respectively. The latter is the revised edition of *Reason and Energy,* which had been published by Grove Press in 1957. At the same time, i.e., in 1970, Princeton University Press issued *Hofmannsthal: Three Essays,* which basically consists of Hamburger's introductions to the two volumes he edited for the Bollingen Foundation. Out of these three critical studies, *The Truth of Poetry* - where Hamburger provides his readers with a panorama of American and European poetry allocating German poetry its appropriate place - "had most impact and is the only one that is still in print again, having been out of print for a long time" (Hamburger 1998). "Michael Hamburger's richly concrete study," the critic M. L. Rosenthal wrote in *Poetry* (Chicago):

> is as intelligent a reconsideration of what has happened as one can find. [...] It is most useful in its overview of contemporary developments in Europe of some of the chief theoretical emphases of our day, all without arbitrariness if not without conviction, and is just one more sign of the awakening in the past few years of British criticism to the question of redefining "modernity." Apart from Hamburger's great specificity, I particularly like his understanding of the real, but protean, elusive, ever shifting and disappearing and reappearing connection between the mind's search for knowledge and practical wisdom and its entrancement by imagination, by aesthetic disinterestedness, and by the plastic possibilities of language.
>
> (Rosenthal 1971: 103-4)

Hamburger started a second US-crusade in the mid- 1980s with the publication of *A Proliferation of Prophets: Essays on German Writers from Nietzsche to Brecht* and *After the Second Flood: Essays on Post- War German Literature.* "The prose books were my attempt to bring into print all of Michael's durable essays in a kind of 'collected' edition," Michael Schmidt (1998) of Carcanet

Press told me by e-mail. St. Martin's Press, New York, was not Carcanet's co-publisher, but "simply bought in 400-750 copies of our editions." (Schmidt 1998) However, they did not seem to go down well with the American reading public. Hamburger holds that "they did not sell at all. [...] Somebody I know in America tried to buy one of those books. He could not get it from a bookshop. They were a complete flop." (Hamburger 1998).

Hamburger's role as critic is not restricted to the publishing of books. Between the mid-1950s and the early 1980s he also played an active role on the American little magazine scene as reviewer for prominent magazines, *Chicago Review* and *Poetry* (Chicago) among them. An excellent example of Hamburger the reviewer is his early review-essay on Erich Heller's *The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern Literature and Thought*, which was published in *Chicago Review* in spring 1958. The following extract is a good example of seriousness of Hamburger's approach to literature:

> [Professor Heller's criticism] expresses a discomfort which many have felt, but few have dared to voice. Though personally I am in favour of what Professor Heller calls "spiritual timidity" in dealing with a matter at once so momentous and so slippery as the theme of this book, it is something to have the courage of one's despair. My own reaction to so extreme a claim for the philosophical approach to literature happens to be a recoil in favour of poetry; but then I have long ceased to live by a gospel compiled out of quotations by my favourite poets; and I have never been able to regard art, or any human activity whatsoever, as unrelated to all other human activities. (Hamburger 1958: 80)

Another interesting example is his well-argued review-essay on David Young's translation of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, which at the time of its publication was acclaimed by several prominent poets as *the* American rendering of Rilke's text, because Young's approach to translation - an attempt to make the text more contemporary, more American by breaking up Rilke's lines in the manner of William Carlos Williams's "variable foot" - runs counter to Hamburger's ethos:

> If it were really necessary for literary works, even works as recent, relatively speaking, as the *Duino Elegies*, to be thoroughly modernized, "updated," in every regard whenever they are newly translated, the implication would be that a contemporary work in English, *The Waste Land*, for instance, calls for similar treatment if it is to remain "alive" and "urgent." This makes the assumption not only false but insulting, since it would mean that readers have become incapable of the slightest effort to adjustment to conventions and periods other than their own. That there are such readers, that there is a trend that way - even among professors who have

> ceased to believe in what they profess - leaves no doubt as to where that assumption leads. (Hamburger 1979: 236)

Instead of a Resume

Finally, some comments on the subtitle of my essay: the reason why I would like to describe Hamburger's translations as "celebration of German literature" is connected with his ethos, which he sums up at the end of his Introduction to *German Poetry 1910-1975,* when he says, "Like all my translations, these take no more liberties than are needed to come as close as possible to the original texts, that is their tone, gesture, tension, dynamic of feeling as much as their surface 'meaning.' My hope is that they will convey something of the quiddity of each poem, not of my quiddity [...]" (Hamburger 1977: xxxiii).

Hamburger's influence as translator of German literature is adequately summed up by the British poet Rodney Pybus in a judgment which, I believe, also holds true for many American readers: "Everyone who has been reading poetry in English in recent decades (especially those without German) is in Michael's debt, for opening so many windows into German literary culture" (Pybus 1994: 5).

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